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December 1, 2006

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS ON THE SINGLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT NAME : Bridgewater Place Shopping Center
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Bridgewater
PROJECT WATERSHED : Taunton River
EOEA NUMBER : 13846
PROJECT PROPONENT : Property Investors LLC
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : October 25, 2006

As Secretary of Environmental Affairs, I hereby determine that the Single Environmental Impact Report (EIR) submitted on the above project **adequately and properly complies** with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and with its implementing regulations (301 CMR 11.00).

Project Description

As described in the Single EIR, the project involves development of 135,000 square feet of a retail shopping center along Pleasant Street (Route 104) in Bridgewater and entails the relocation of the Motor Cars International Dealership to a new lot on the south side of Route 104. The shopping center would be constructed on the 28.46 acre parcel of land on the north side of Pleasant Street and an existing business, Motor Cars International, would be relocated from the north parcel to a 2.53 acre parcel on the south side of Pleasant Street. The existing Honey Dew Donut Shop will remain in its current location and will share parking spaces with the new shopping center. Access to the site will be provided at a full-access driveway on Route 104. Based on ITE Land Use Code 820, the project is expected to generate 8,254 vehicle-trips on an average weekday and 11,164 vehicle trips on an average Saturday. The project will create 9.89 acres of impervious surface. Stormwater from the project site will infiltrate and flow north and west towards the Hockomock Swamp and Lake Nippenicket.

All but 2.53 acres of the 30.99 acre project site are located in the Hockomock Swamp Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Hockomock Swamp ACEC acts as a large water reservoir and serves as the headwaters for the Town River, which flows into the Taunton River. The wetlands and floodplains of the ACEC are connected to an extensive underlying system of medium- and high-yield aquifers which feed public water supplies in the area. The ACEC is also important for its natural and cultural values and recreational opportunities.

The proposed project also involves a land transfer from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD). The proponent has met with MHD to discuss a land transfer that would provide adequate acreage for the development of the project. As a result of the discussions, the EENF included a traffic study that was prepared to address the project's traffic impacts, and a conceptual design was developed to allow the land swap without compromising MHD's ability to construct new on-and-off ramps between Route 24 and Route 104 in the northeast quadrant of the interchange. The on-and-off ramps will partially complete the interchange and address long-term regional traffic demand at the interchange and along the Route 104 corridor.

Jurisdiction and Project Review

The project is undergoing review and requires the preparation of a mandatory EIR pursuant to section 11.03 (6)(a)(6) of the MEPA regulations, because it will generate more than 3,000 new vehicle trips per day. The project is also undergoing review pursuant to Section 11.03 (1)(b)(2) and Section 11.03 (11)(b) of the MEPA regulations, because the project will involve creation of more than 5 acres of new impervious surfaces and is located within a designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and requires state agency action. The project requires an Access Permit from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) and Sewer Connection/Extension Permit from the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), and an Order of Conditions from the Bridgewater Conservation Commission (and hence a Superseding Order from DEP if the local Order were appealed). The proposed project also involves a land transfer from MHD. The project construction activities will disturb one or more acres of land and therefore, may also require a NPDES Stormwater Permit for Construction Activities.

Because the proponent is not seeking direct financial assistance from the Commonwealth for the project, MEPA jurisdiction extends to those aspects of the project that may have significant environmental impacts and that are within the subject matter of required or potentially required state permits. In this case, MEPA jurisdiction exists over land alteration, traffic/air quality, wetlands, stormwater, and wastewater.

MEPA History/Review

In accordance with Section 11.05(7) of the MEPA regulations, the proponent submitted an Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) with a request that I allow the proponent to

fulfill its EIR obligations under MEPA with a Single EIR, rather than the usual process of a Draft and Final EIR. The EENF received an extended comment period pursuant to Section 11.06(8) of the MEPA regulations. In a Certificate issued on September 14, 2006, I found that the EENF met the regulatory requirements and I allowed the proponent to file a Single EIR in fulfillment of Section 11.03 of the MEPA regulations. The Certificate on the EENF laid out the issues to be addressed in the Single EIR.

Two existing businesses, Honey Dew Donuts and Motor Cars International are currently located on the North Parcel of the project site. As proposed, the Honey Dew Donut shop will remain in its current location and the Motor Cars International dealership will be relocated to the vacant South Parcel. The 135,000 square foot shopping center will be constructed on the North Parcel directly behind the Honey Dew Donuts and will share parking. A 6,000 square foot building will be constructed on the south parcel and it will become the new home for Motor Cars International. Additionally, the project has been designed to avoid adverse impact to wetland resources.

The project features removal of the existing facilities from on-site wastewater disposal. This will be a positive benefit to the Hockomock swamp area and surrounding ACEC by reducing impacts to groundwater associated with on-site sewage disposal. Total new average daily sewage flows are estimated at 10,040 gallons per day. The proposed project will comply with the rules and regulations set forth by both the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as well as the Town of Bridgewater.

The project site contains an important ancient Native American archaeological site (19-PL-169). In the EENF I requested that an archaeological site examination referred to as "Phase II Survey" be conducted for the project. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) is still awaiting the full report. The SEIR was required to contain a summary of the results of the report. The preliminary completion memorandum submitted does not provide sufficient information for MHC to determine if the archaeological site is significant. I am requiring that the proponent consult with MHC to consider feasible project alternatives that would avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects and submit the required full "Phase II Survey" survey to MHC prior to any state permitting. The proponent should submit to MEPA the requested updated summary of the results of the report in a manner that does not disclose the location of any archaeological sites to protect the sites. If a Memorandum of Agreement is developed with MHC, a copy should be provided to MEPA. In addition, if the project requires any changes as a result of the consultation with MHC, the proponent should consult with the MEPA office to determine if a Notice of Project Change is required (NPC).

The Single EIR has included enough information to understand the project's impacts, and the project design generally includes appropriate mitigation for project impacts. I am confident that the remaining issues, as highlighted in the thoughtful comments received, can be resolved as the project completes local review and state permitting.

Mitigation

The Single EIR contained a separate chapter on all mitigation measures to which the proponent has committed and draft Section 61 Findings for state agencies. A schedule for the implementation of mitigation was also included. The proponent committed to the following mitigation measures in the Single EIR:

Route 24 at Route 104 Ramp Design Mitigation Commitments:

1. The proponent commits to advancing the conceptual Ramp Design for the northeast quadrant of the Route 24 at Route 104 interchange to a 25% Design level. A 25% design plan set prepared per the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) Project Development and Design Guide and will be submitted to MHD for their use.
2. A portion of the Route 104 corridor falls in State Highway within the Route 24 at Route 104 Interchange layout. This short corridor includes the Route 24 northbound and southbound on and off ramps intersections with Route 104. Specific mitigation commitments within this corridor are as follows:
 - Route 24 Northbound Ramps at Pleasant Street – A Traffic Signal System is proposed at the intersection of Route 24 Northbound Ramps at Pleasant Street. All signal hardware, signing and pavement striping necessary for a complete traffic signal system will be installed or constructed.
 - Route 24 Southbound Ramps at Pleasant Street – A Traffic Signal System is proposed at the intersection of Route 24 Southbound Ramps at Pleasant Street. All signal hardware, signing and pavement striping necessary for a complete traffic signal system will be installed or constructed.
 - Intersection Coordination – Coordination of the signal timings and phasings at the two Ramp Intersections with the proposed signals on the local portion of Route 104 at the Site Driveway and at Elm Street/Old Pleasant Street. The four signals will be either hard wired or radio linked and controlled by a master controller to create a closed loop system that will improve traffic flow through the corridor
 - Emergency Vehicle Pre-emption - Installation of Emergency vehicle pre-emption equipment at each of the new traffic signal system locations is proposed to improve response time for emergency vehicles
 - Roadway Widening – Roadway widening will be performed on Route 104 to accommodate the added lane proposed for the corridor east of the Route 24 northbound off-ramp to Route 104 eastbound. The added lane will allow the channelized vehicles exiting the ramp turning right to flow into their own lane without yielding to Route 104 eastbound through traffic.

The proponent has also worked with local officials from the Town of Bridgewater and has

committed to the following list of local transportation mitigation measures as follows:

- Pleasant Street Corridor Improvements – Improvements include widening of the roadway and lane striping between Route 24 Ramps and Elm Street to allow for two travel lanes in each direction and increasing capacity of the corridor
- Site Driveway and Commons Driveway at Pleasant Street – Installing a Traffic Signal System at the intersection of the Site Driveway and Commons Driveway at Pleasant Street will provide safe and efficient access and egress for the site while also limiting the number of access points on the south side of Pleasant Street by the creation of a shared driveway for the Commons Plaza and the relocated car dealership
- Old Pleasant Street and Elm Street at Pleasant Street - Lane configuration and signal timing adjustments at intersection of Old Pleasant Street and Elm Street at Pleasant Street will improve intersection capacity and level of service
- Intersection Coordination – Coordination of the signal timings and phasings at the four signal systems listed above to create a closed loop system would improve traffic flow through the corridor
- Prospect Street and Cumberland Farms at Pleasant Street – Proposed signal timing adjustments at intersection of Prospect Street and Cumberland Farms at Pleasant Street will mitigate the added traffic from the development
- Center Street and Crescent Street at Pleasant Street – Proposed signal timing adjustments at intersections of Center Street and Crescent Street at Pleasant Street will mitigate the added traffic from the development
- Vernon Street at Pleasant Street – Proposed clearing of brush and vegetation at intersection of Vernon Street at Pleasant Street would increase available sight distance and improve safety. Implement no-left turn restriction from Vernon Street identified as an Immediate Action Item in the Comprehensive Master Plan if the Town desires
- Pedestrian Improvements – Pedestrian improvements including reconstruction of sidewalks and installation of pedestrian signal equipment at each of the new traffic signal system locations are proposed
- Emergency Vehicle Pre-emption - Installation of Emergency vehicle pre-emption equipment at each of the new traffic signal system locations is proposed to improve response time for emergency vehicles

Transportation Demand Management Mitigation Commitment:

The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) elements the proponent is committed to are summarized below. All of the TDM measures will be coordinated and managed by an Employee Transportation Coordinator who will be a full time, management level employee of the store.

- Ridesharing program with preferential parking spaces reserved for employees that carpool.
Pedestrian accommodations, including rebuilding sidewalks on Pleasant Street along the

site frontage and providing pedestrian signals at the main site entrance.

- Bicycle accommodations, including internal bike racks, lockers and showers for employees that bike to work, external bike rack area for customers that visit the store via bicycle.
- A guaranteed ride home program for those that carpool, walk, or bike to work, should emergencies, unforeseen delays at work or inclement weather create a situation where an employee is unable to leave work via the same means they arrived.
- Staggered work shifts that will spread-out the arrival of employees during specified 8-hour work shifts over the course of 30 to 60 minutes.
- Coordinating shuttle bus service with Bridgewater State College and the Bridgewater Council on Aging.

Traffic Monitoring Program Mitigation Commitment:

The proponent is committed to implement a detailed traffic-monitoring program. The specific elements of the monitoring program are summarized as follows:

- The monitoring program will span a two-year period beginning in the first year of the store opening.
- All of the main study area locations identified in the EENF and SEIR will be included in the monitoring program.
- Following review of the findings in the first year of the program, should traffic conditions be significantly different than estimated, and as a result present unforeseen impacts on travel, the proponent is committed to making necessary follow up improvements to mitigate the unforeseen impacts. Indicators that would trigger such action would include trip generation numbers in excess of 25% above those estimated, and distribution of traffic that results in a drop in overall level of service at the study area intersections based on comparison with the Build with Mitigation results reported in the Single EIR for 2011.

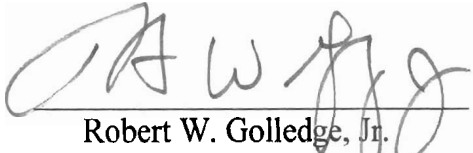
I remind the permitting agencies to forward copies of Section 61 Findings, once issued, to the MEPA Office for completion of the project files.

Conclusion

I find the Single EIR to be adequate and am allowing the project to proceed to the state agencies for permitting after resolving historic issues with MHC. The Single EIR contained adequate information on project alternatives, impacts, and mitigation, and provided the state permitting agencies with sufficient information to understand the environmental consequences of their permit decisions. No further MEPA review is required.

December 1, 2006

Date


Robert W. Golledge, Jr.

Comments received:

11/09/06 DCR's Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Program
11/20/06 Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1st Comment Letter
11/22/06 Executive Office of Transportation, Massachusetts Highway Department
11/24/06 Bernice Morrissey
11/24/06 Don & Marcia DiNunno
11/24/06 Department of Environmental Protection, SERO
11/24/06 Lake Nippenicket Action Focus Team
11/28/06 Massachusetts Historical Commission , 2nd Comment Letter

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