



## City of New Bedford

### Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development

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## STAFF REPORT

### REPORT DATE

June 8, 2018

### PLANNING BOARD MEETING

June 13, 2018

- Case #18-27: SITE PLAN REVIEW  
Case #18-28: SPECIAL PERMIT  
Case #18-29: GROUND SIGN SITE PLAN REVIEW

385 Church Street  
Map 113, Lot 475

**Applicant/** BRK 1, LLC  
**Owner:** 31100 Telegraph Road, Suite 250  
Bingham Farms, MI 48025

**Applicant's** STANTEC Consulting Services, Inc.  
**Agent:** 226 Causeway Street  
Boston, MA

### Overview

The applicant's request is for the expansion and conversion of an existing single story (78,085± SF) industrial warehouse building into a two story (153,638± SF) self-storage facility with associated site improvements. The site is located at 385 Church Street (Map 113, Lot 475) in an Industrial B (IB) zoned district.

The site improvements necessitate **Site Plan Approval** and include a reduction in the number of parking spaces from the four hundred and thirty-five (435) parking spaces and seven (7) loading spaces that are required, to nine (9) parking and four (4) loading spaces; as such the applicant has also submitted a request for a **Special Permit** for a reduction of parking requirements. Additionally, the applicant request includes **Site Plan Approval for a Ground Sign**, as the site proposal includes a new pylon ground sign.



385 Church Street



387 Church Street (Looking south west from Church Street)

### **Existing Conditions**

The project location was most recently the site of Julius Koch USA, a luxury blinds manufacturing business. The 4.13 acre site has 450' of frontage on Church Street and contains a 78,085 SF single story warehouse building, 19' in height. The "L" shaped building is setback from the road toward the rear of the lot with a 156 space parking lot located in front. Almost the entire site is paved except for limited landscaped areas located in front of the building, on the north side of the building, and a grass strip running the length of the south side property line.

Along with the 156 parking spaces the site currently has three (3) loading spaces serving three (3) loading bay doors located in the center of the building along the front elevation (east). The parking lot surface has cracking in areas and a few pot holes. A bituminous asphalt sidewalk is located in front of the site along the Church Street frontage.

Two driveways provide access to the site from Church Street; one at the northeast corner of the site and the other is near the southeast corner of the site. In the rear northwest corner of the site a driveway provides shared access between this site and the adjacent Plumbers' Supply site.

Wall pack and overhead parking lot pole lights provide lighting on-site.

A pylon sign is located on-site along the frontage near the southern most driveway entrance. The Julius Koch company name and logo are painted on the east elevation of the building.

A dumpster has been removed from the south west (rear) corner of the lot while compactors are still present in the northwest corner of the site.

Chain link fencing with barbed wire surrounds and encloses the rear of the lot with gated access. A guard rail separates the parking lot area from the sidewalk along the frontage and from the adjacent property along the north side.

The surrounding neighborhood has industrial properties on the west side of Church Street while a residential neighborhood is on the east side. Industrial properties are directly abutting this property to the north and south. These industrial properties are Plumbers' Supply Company and Clean Uniforms and More, respectively. Railroad tracks are located to the rear (west) of the site and single family residential properties are located directly east across Church Street.

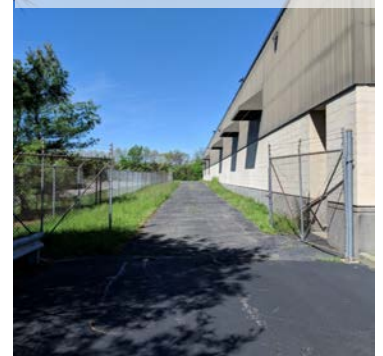
**East elevation (south end of the building)**



**North elevation (Location of proposed drive-in loading bay)**



**South side (looking west)**





### **Proposed Conditions**

The applicant proposes to expand and convert the property into a two-story, self-storage facility with 1,200 storage units. The storage units will range in sizes from 25 SF to 300 SF. The existing roof will be raised approximately six feet (6') on the entire building except for the small projection (59'x45') located on the north side of the building. The resulting height will be approximately twenty-five feet (25'±). The total gross floor area of the building will be increased to 153,683 SF as a result of the expansion of which 107,000 SF will be leasable storage spaces. A retail office will be located in the southern portion of the building along the east elevation, closest to the street. The remainder of the building will be the self-storage units.

The proposal retains many, and selectively removes some, existing site features. Most notably the proposal substantially reduces the number of parking spaces on-site, increases green space, adds landscaping, reconfigures site circulation, and installs two bio-retention basins. A new ground sign advertising the new business is also proposed.

### **Operations.**

The proposed self-storage facility would be open for customers from 6am-10pm, seven days a week, with staff on-site for office hours from 8am-6pm. The facility would have two employees. The applicant expects to serve 20-25 customers per day. According to the application cameras will be throughout the building and a door entry code is required for entry.

**Parking.** The applicant requests a special permit for a reduction of the parking requirement. Under the ordinance (which does not provide a parking standard specific to self-storage units) the project is required to have 435 off-street parking spaces and seven (7) loading spaces contrasting with the nine (9) parking spaces and four (4) loading spaces being proposed.

The nine (9) resurfaced parking spaces are proposed in the south east corner of the site, in front of the proposed main office. One ADA accessible handicapped space is included in the proposed spaces. Four (4) interior loading spaces are proposed inside the building. Drive-in loading bays with over head doors are proposed in two locations: the center of the building along the east (front) elevation (the location of the existing loading bays) and on the north side elevation. Both locations will have two overhead translucent dock doors. The pavement will be graded to create ramps into the proposed drive-in bay doors.

The board may wish to note that the applicant proposes to selectively saw cut the existing pavement



*Rear (Looking north from SW corner of site)*



*North elevation rear (looking south from NW corner of site)*



*Southeast corner of the site  
(Location of proposed resurfaced parking area)*

in order to retain portions of the existing pavement. The ramp areas will be new pavement, the drive aisles and parking area will be resurfaced pavement, and a paved portion in the middle of the site will remain as is.

Staff notes that the plans depict areas where additional parking and loading spaces could be added though are not identified nor delineated as such on the plan set. Of note is a paved area on the north side of the building with curbed landscaped areas on each side of it. This area is approximately 21' x 60' and could easily accommodate additional parking spaces. Also, staff notes the width of the proposed drive in front of the building is substantially wide at 54'. Additional parking and loading spaces could be delineated in this area.

**Circulation.** The internal circulation is controlled by granite curbing along the entrance driveways and concrete curb on the interior of the site. Staff notes that curbing is not shown around the new proposed lawn area in the center of the site. This is likely so the run-off can reach the bio-retention area. However, if the area in front of the building is likely to be used for loading and unloading of vehicles it may be appropriate to have a curb along that section. Additionally, the plans do not show any new curbing to be installed for a section directly in front of the building. It is presumed from the site preparation plan (Sheet 4) that the existing concrete curbing is to remain. The board may wish to confirm with the applicant and require the applicant to show all final curbing on a final plan set.

The board may also wish to discuss entrance and egress access controls for the interior loading areas to reduce potential vehicular conflicts.

**Landscaping.** The landscaping plan submitted with the application provides little detail in regards to the plantings proposed on-site. The board may wish to condition any approval on the submittal of a finalized and complete landscaped plan to the satisfaction of the City Planner. In regards to what is shown on the plans, the proposal increases the green space area on the site considerably. Along the south side property line an existing paved drive and some parking spaces will be removed and replaced with grass up to the edge of the proposed new resurfaced and reconfigured parking area. Five (5) large trees and shrubs are shown to be planted



**Northeast corner of the site (looking southwest)**



**North side of site (looking west)**  
*(Location of loading bay and potential additional parking area)*



**Existing parking lot (looking south)**

in the landscaped areas surrounding this parking area; five smaller trees will line the eastern edge of the parking area. A small bio-retention basin is also shown to the south east of the parking area.

In front of the building and along the north side seven (7) existing mature trees in the existing landscaped areas are to remain. It is unclear from the plans submitted if any other existing plantings will remain or new landscaping will be introduced in these areas. A new substantially large grassy area (225'± x 75'±) is proposed in the front of the site. The new lawn area will include four (4) large trees, seven (7) smaller trees, and various shrubs. A large bio-retention basin is proposed in this area as well.

Eight (8) street trees are proposed along the Church Street frontage in a new sidewalk grass ribbon.

**Snow/Trash Removal.** Snow disposal is not indicated on the site plan. The Planning Board may wish to specifically discuss snow disposal plans with the applicant.

The application narrative explains that the generation of trash is limited and only requires one small locked dumpster. Waste disposal areas are not shown on the plans however. The board should have the applicant specify the outdoor waste facilities location on-site, along with any screening intended. This information should be indicated on a final plan set.

**Stormwater.** The board should note the applicant has submitted a request for a waiver of the storm water report and the topography and drainage plan requirements. In lieu of a storm water report the applicant has provided a storm water management memorandum.

Currently the roof drains are tied directly into the city system and will remain as is under the proposal. The surface runoff is currently captured by a storm drain located in the southeast corner of the site. Another storm drain exists in the north east corner of the site yet does not capture runoff from this site due to the direction of the runoff.

The proposal creates two bio-retention basins a smaller one in the southeast corner and a larger one along the frontage. The proposal includes retaining the existing storm drains; the drain in the southeast corner will be part of the proposed bio-retention basin, while the northeast drain will be connected to the larger bio-retention basin via high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe. Both drains are, and as proposed will remain, connected to the city system.

Comments have yet to be received from the Department of Public Infrastructure [DPI]. The board should condition any approval per DPI approval for drainage.

**Lighting.** The proposed lighting on-site will include six (6) new overhead parking lot pole lights; one over the parking area and the others lining the drive. Three (3) wall pack lights are proposed; one for the east loading bay, one for the north loading bay, and a one over the rear exit door.

The positioning of the pole lights differs slightly on the Lighting Plan (Sheet 12) than as shown on the rest of the plan set. The board should confirm the lighting plan is the final locations and condition the approval that the applicant reconciles the other plan sheets to match for the final plan set.

**Signage.** The existing pylon sign will be removed and the existing painted logo on the wall will be covered over by the changes to the facade. A new pylon sign and wall signage are proposed.

The pylon sign, as a new ground sign, requires site plan approval by the board. The dimensions and size of the sign are in conformance with the zoning code requirements. The proposed internally illuminated pylon sign face will be 24.5 SF (7'w x 3'6"h) with have an overall sign height of 13' 6" from the ground to the top of the sign, and 10' from



the base of the sign to the ground. The sign faces will be white polycarbonate with red exterior grade vinyl applied. The cabinet and pole will be painted black. It is proposed near the southern driveway entrance in new grassed area on the north side of the drive. The sign is depicted as set back approximately three feet (3'±) from the property line. The board should note, per section 3256 of the code, ground signs are required to be setback six feet (6') from the front property line.

New wall signage is proposed as well. The elevation drawings depict six (6) wall signs: "Cube Smart", "Office", "Drive-In Loading" (2 signs), "Loading" (2 signs). The signage specifications provided however do not include the "Cube Smart" sign and only provides overall area information for the other three wall sign types proposed. It is unclear if the proposed wall signage is internally illuminated cabinets or channel letters, or a combination of the two. The "office sign" is depicted as a canopy sign. The amount of signage is well within allowable overall area (SF) limits but the board may wish to clarify more specifics details about the proposed signage.

### **Review Comments**

As required under city ordinance, the case submittal documents were distributed to City Clerk, City Solicitor, Health Department, Inspectional Services, Engineering, Public Infrastructure, Conservation Commission, Fire Department and School Department.

No comments were received by staff prior to this reports publication. Any comments received will be made available at the public meeting.

### **Master Plan Goal**

Insofar as this proposal would support the continued operation of an industrially zoned site within the city, staff finds that this proposal is consistent with the master plan's goal [of establishing a sound foundation for future growth that builds upon its coastal location, preserves its historic legacy, and expands cultural and workforce opportunities] as it improves the neighborhood, and attracts emerging businesses and commercial enterprise.

### **Materials for Consideration**

The plan submittal is shown as Self-Storage Facility – 387 Church Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts; Owner: BRK 1, LLC, dated May 11, 2018; date stamped received by City Clerk's Office May 14, 2018. Plans were prepared by Stantec, in Boston, MA and stamped by Frank Holmes, PE. The plan set consists of the following sheets:

- Sheet 1            Cover Sheet
- Sheet 2            Context Plan
- Sheet 3            Existing Conditions Plan, drawn by Precision Land Surveying, Inc., dated April 2, 2017.
- Sheet 4            Site Preparation Plan
- Sheet 5            Layout and Materials Plan
- Sheet 6            Grading and Drainage Plan
- Sheet 7            Utility Plan
- Sheet 8            Landscaping Plan
- Sheet 9            Site Details
- Sheet 10          Site Details 2
- Sheet 11          Utility Details
- Sheet 12          Lighting Plan

The following additional architectural plan set materials - unstamped—were also provided, titled as Self-Storage Facility 387 Church Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts, dated May 11, 2018, date stamped received by City Clerk's Office May 14, 2018 prepared by Groundwork, LTD, in Buffalo Grove, IL. The plan set consists of the following sheets:

- Sheet A5-0 Building Elevations (East & North)
- Sheet A5-1 Building Elevations (West & South)
- Unnumbered Preliminary Site/ First Floor Plan
- Unnumbered Preliminary Second Floor Plan
- Unnumbered Preliminary Color Elevations

In addition to the foregoing submitted materials, the Planning Board may also wish to consider:

- **Waivers**  
The applicant has submitted waiver petitions for consideration by the Planning Board. The waivers are requested for the following requirements: Topography and Drainage Plan and Stormwater Report.
- **Development Impact Statement (DIS)**  
Although not required unless the Board requests it, the applicant has not provided a traffic analysis for the proposed development.
- **Traffic Impact & Access Study**  
Although not required unless the Board requests it, the applicant has not provided a traffic analysis for the proposed development.

### **#18-27 Site Plan Approval**

In considering Site Plan Approval for the proposed project, the Board must find the plan to meet a number of objectives identified in Section 5470 of the City's (c.9) Zoning Ordinance including:

- **Adequate access to each structure for fire and service equipment;**
- **Adequate provision for utilities and stormwater drainage;**
- **Site alteration shall be designed after considering the qualities of the specific location, proposed land use, the design of building form, grading, egress points and other aspects of the development so as to:**
  - Minimize cut/fill volumes, removal of 6" caliper trees and larger, removal of stone walls , displacement of wetland vegetation, extent of stormwater flow increase from the site, soil erosion and the threat of air/water pollution;
  - Maximize pedestrian/vehicular safety to/from the site;
  - Minimize the obstruction of scenic views from publicly accessible locations;
  - Minimize visual intrusion by controlling layout/visibility of parking, storage and outdoor service areas viewed from public ways and residential areas;
  - Minimize glare from vehicle headlights and lighting fixtures;
  - Minimize unreasonable departure from the character, materials and scale of buildings in the vicinity;
  - Minimize contamination of groundwater from on-site wastewater disposal systems or operations on the premises involving the use, storage, handling or containment of solid/liquid wastes and hazardous substances;
  - Ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance;
  - Minimize damage to existing adjacent public ways;
  - Promote orderly and reasonable internal circulation within the site so as to protect public safety.

The proposed additional landscaping and green space would improve the visual aesthetic for the neighborhood. The project maintains safe vehicular movements though the site and improves the pedestrian experience on the sidewalk. Lastly, the project fits in with the character of the existing industrially zoned area and is considerate of the adjacent residential neighborhood – through the landscaping and site design. In light of these facts staff finds that with the conditions presented under "staff recommendations" this proposal satisfies these objectives.

## **#18-28 Special Permit**

In considering the application for Special Permit for parking reduction, the Board must take into account the characteristics of the site and of the proposal in relation to that site, in addition to any specific factors that may be set forth under Section 5300 of the zoning ordinance.

- **Social, economic, or community needs which are served by the proposal.**

The proposal reactivates a currently vacant industrial property adding to the commercial activity and employment in opportunities in the city. The proposal increases the green space in a corridor with substantial impervious areas.

- **Traffic flow and safety, including parking and loading.**

Given the number of proposed storage units (1,200) and the limited proposed parking planning, staff recommends the board discuss industry standards for percentage of units with visitors on any given day/anticipated clientele, the number of staff onsite at any given time and the need to accommodate oversized vehicles, such as trucks and full-size SUVs.

The board may wish to inquire about how the egress and exit is controlled into and out of the loading area to avoid vehicular conflict. While the doors are shown to be clear and therefore increase visual safety, given the ramps to the doors the board may wish to inquire about any additional safety measures.

The board may wish to discuss the possibility of additional parking and loading area being designated in site given the proposed site design. As previously noted while not designated for parking or loading there are areas on site that could accommodate any additional vehicular demand or larger vehicles on site given their proposed design and the width.

- **Adequacy of utilities and other public services.**

Whereas the applicant is proposing complete utility and public services, there is no anticipated issue with this adequacy. Conditioning any approval on DPI's approval of adequacy to this end is recommended.

- **Neighborhood character and social structures.**

This neighborhood is a mix of industrial sites on the west side of Church Street and residential dwellings on the east side. The proposed reuse is in line with the scale and aesthetic of the surrounding industrial sites and is sympathetic to the neighborhood. The light shed proposed is cutoff from the residential properties and the addition of landscaping along the frontage improves the site's visual integration with the residential neighborhood located directly across from the site.

- **Impacts on the natural environment**

The applicant is converting an existing structure and reducing the built environment on site. The parking reduction is proposed in order for the applicant to meet the 20% green space requirement on site. So, with the addition of impervious area and the proposed storm water management there will be an improvement for the natural environment as a result of this proposal over existing conditions.

- **Potential fiscal impact, including impact on City services, tax base, and employment**

Having this property expanded and the site improved will provide a positive fiscal impact on the city and the broader neighborhood by improving property values. Outside of water/sewer/trash services (which would be needed for any use), staff does not believe any additional city services are necessitated by this application.



## Staff Recommendations



**Site Plan Approval.** Having reviewed the submitted materials, planning staff offers the following recommendations for conditions to the Planning Board should it act favorably on the requested site plan approval for the project:

- ☐ That the following specific conditions be applied to this decision:
  - Additional parking and loading areas be delineated in designated area on the north side of the building and in front of the building [*If the board determines the additional spaces are required*].
  - Revised plan set depict only the final proposed site conditions in their entirety.
  - An updated and detailed landscaped plan to be provided for the board's review and approval.
  - Lighting locations to be reconciled between the Lighting Plan sheet and all other plan sheets.
  - Specifics about the type of wall signage to be provided for the board's review.
  - Information about snow disposal be provided.
  - Information about trash locations, and the screening of, if needed, be provided.
  - Ground sign to be set back six (6') from the front property line, as required under ordinance.
  - The drainage system/plan be brought into compliance with City requirements, and be approved by DPI.
- ☐ That the following general conditions also be applied to this decision:
  - The project shall be completed according to the plans, notes, reports, and specifications submitted for consideration and final approval by the Planning Board.
  - The project shall be undertaken in a manner consistent with the (forthcoming) Memorandum from the Department of Public Infrastructure received and placed on file and the Planning Board incorporates the DPI memo as part of these conditions.
  - The applicant shall submit final plan revisions to the Planning Division in the following formats: one (1) -11" x 17" Plan Set and one (1) CD or USB with Plan Set in PDF format and shall ensure that these same plans are properly submitted to the Department of Inspectional Services.
  - The applicant shall ensure that a copy of the Notice of Decision, bearing the certification of the New Bedford City Clerk signifying no appeal has been made against the project's approval, be provided for the Planning Division Case file folder.
  - The applicant shall present any proposed modification from the approved plans for consideration to the City Planner for determination as to whether the modified plan must return before this Board for further review.
  - The rights authorized by the granted approval must be exercised by issuance of a Building Permit by the Department of Inspectional Services and acted upon within one year from the date the decision was granted or they will lapse.



**Special Permit.** Having reviewed the submitted materials, the characteristics of the site and the factors outlined in this staff report, staff recommends favorable action on the special permit. However, the board may wish to have the areas identified by staff added as additional parking areas. The applicant would have to submit revised plans to the board before a vote could be made in order to calculate the exact number of parking and loading spaces the applicant would be receiving relief for.

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**Materials Provided by the Applicant** are available at: <http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/planning/planning-board/planning-board-agenda-info-2018/>

## 387 Church Street Map: 113, Lot(s): 475

*NOTE: Property line is approximate; for discussion purposes, only. Aerial map is oriented north.*

