



Cell Signaling Receives Height Variance From MBTS ZBA



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By Jeff Pope

Cell Signaling Technology will be allowed to exceed the town’s height restrictions at its proposed research-and-development laboratories off Atwater Avenue in Manchester’s Limited Commercial District.

The Manchester-by-the-Sea Zoning Board of Appeal voted 5-0 on November 15 to allow CST to exceed by eight feet for the height of the building, to allow a four-foot increase in the height of mechanical appurtenances and to allow an 11-foot increase in the height of vent pipes.

The members of the ZBA along with officials from CST and their representatives, conducted a site visit on November 11 to the area northeast of the Manchester Athletic Club, where a stone quarry had been active at one time. The quarry has left a cliff of over 40 feet high.

CST is proposing to build a multi-story laboratory and parking garage in two phases, where about 520 employees will work.

“Early on in our discussions with the Planning Board, we were informed that the town would prefer to see less of the (laboratory) building from (Route) 128,” said CST’s representative Attorney Mark Glovsky. “We were also encouraged to develop the disturbed portions of the property and to try to leave the undisturbed portions of the property undisturbed. So that is precisely what Cell Signaling is proposing to do.”

Samir Srouji, the principal architect at HGA, the design firm for the CST project, explained that the proposed building would straddle the cliff, so that only two floors of the building would be above ground facing Route 128 but there would be multiple floors facing in the opposite direction of Cape Ann Storage, an industrial-purpose storage facility that abuts CST’s site.

Because the building sits back from the top of the cliff and because there is a steep rise from the highway up to the upper meadow, Srouji said the building will not be seen from the highway.

“Minimize the visual impact from 128 has always been a driver (for CST),” said Srouji. “But because it sits so low in the side, we actually achieve that.”

Glovsky said that CST was reaching the second goal by only building on less than eight of the 48 acres it owns. The remaining 40 acres will be left as forest with walking trails connecting to the Trustee of Reservation’s property at The Monoliths.

“CST decided to invest in a garage for parking to minimize the amount of paved surface,” said Srouji. “The garage is at a low point, so it minimizes its visibility from 128.”

Sjouri said that the vent pipes and mechanicals on the roof of both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 sections of the building had been redesigned to minimize their being seen from the grounds around the buildings.

But he said they needed the addition 11 feet above the allowable 15 feet to make it safe for people to go up to the roof of the building.

“The height of the stack is also beneficial in lowering the fan speed,” said Sjouri. “So, by requesting that height we will be lowering our energy consumption and the greenhouse gas impact on the building.”

Ron Mastrogiacomio of 9 Masconomo St. and chair of the Planning Board, asked if any of the mechanicals could be placed on the ground.

Srouji and other representatives said the vents and mechanicals needed fresh air and were more energy-efficient above the buildings.

ZBA member Jim Diedrich asked if the work CST conducted at its laboratories would present any harm to the town.

The answer was no.

“We are not working with any type of biological re-agents that would pose any harm,” said Mark Allen of HGA.

After the ZBA voted in favor of granting the variance to CST, Glovsky said the next step was to file a request with the Planning Board for a special permit to build the laboratories. He said he expected to file that request by mid-December.

But the special permit hearing will likely not start until January.

Both Mastrogiacomio and Susan Philbrick, Planning Board members, attended the November 15 meeting.



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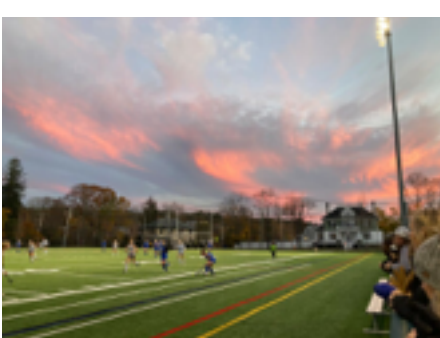
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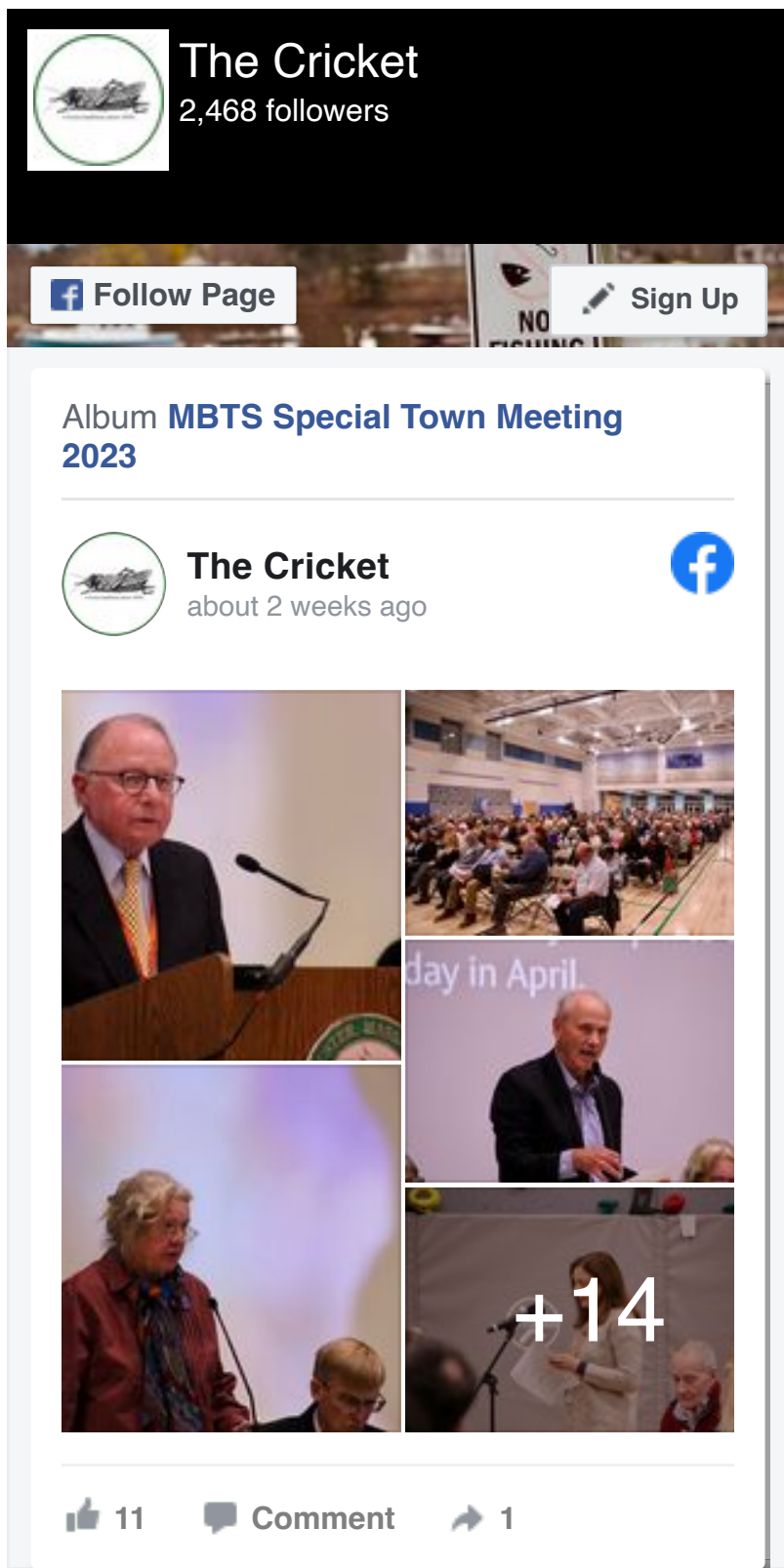
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