

**SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
November 18, 2020**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ron LeHoullier, Chair, Jason Barry, Bob Belmore-City Manager, David Witham, City Council Representative and Mark Richardson, Alternate, Harold Guptill- Vice Chair & Keith Perkins – Alternate, Jeremy Rhodes, Paul Robidas and Chris Horton

**STAFF PRESENT:** Michelle Mears, Director Development Services, Dana Crossley Planning Secretary

The Meeting was called to order at 6:31 PM.

Director Mears stated due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically. The public has access to watch to this meeting through the Local Government Cable Access Ch. 22 (Comcast), and streamed live through the City's website at [www.somersworth.com](http://www.somersworth.com). Although this is a public meeting, the public is encouraged not to attend and instead to leave comments or concerns at the following phone number # 1-603-841-2936, by emailing [planning@somersworth.com](mailto:planning@somersworth.com) or by sending written comment to Planning Board, 1 Government Way, Somersworth NH 03878. Comments must be received no later than 4pm the day of the meeting. She stated all votes will be taken by roll call votes.

Roll call attendance was taken: **LeHoullier** and **Perkins** were present in Council Chambers. **Guptill, Robidas, Barry, Rhodes, Horton, Witham, Belmore and Richardson** were in attendance remotely and alone. Director Mears and Secretary Crossley were also present in Council Chambers.

LeHoullier appointed Richardson as a full voting member for the meeting.

1. **Approval of the minutes of the meeting of October 21, 2020.**  
**Motion:** Witham MOVED to accept the minutes as presented.

Seconded by Belmore.

The MOTION CARRIED by an 8-0-1 roll call vote. (Robidas abstained)

2. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Land Use Board Reports (ZBA, HDC, Conservation Commission, SRTC, Minor Field Reports):**  
Richardson inquired on the outcome of the Minor Site Plan review of the October 21st, Carlton Spencer item.

Mears stated there was no decision made it was reviewed by the SRTC and is in the track to come before Planning Board.

**City Council Report:** Witham stated the sidewalk along Tri City Road associated with the Tara Fields project has been accepted by the City Council. He stated that means the City will now take over maintenance of the sidewalk, most notably snow plowing this winter.

Witham reported the Veterans' Park project is largely complete. He stated there are punch list items that will be address in this fall and upcoming spring.

Witham stated the Council approved Harvey Construction of Bedford as the construction management firm for the Fire Station project. He stated they will work with Port One Architects to get ready for bid with the various subcontractors.

**Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) Update:** No comments.

3. **OLD BUSINESS**

- A) Any old business that may come before the Board.  
No other old business.

4. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A) **Craig Riotto is seeking conceptual site plan review of an Athletic/Fitness Facility on a property located at 165 Route 108 in the Commercial Industrial (CI) District Assessor's Map 63 Lot 10, SITE#12-2020**

**Craig Riotto, James Ball and Geoff Aleva** of Civil Consultants were remotely in attendance to represent the application.

Mears stated this is a conceptual design review of a proposal to construct an air dome structure covering turf field and courts. She stated the applicant requested a conceptual review session with the Board to discuss the footnote of Table 5.A.2 of the Zoning Ordinance that allows the Planning Board to allow heights in excess of that which is permitted provided there are appropriate yard requirement increases. She stated this is a non-binding discussion with the applicant and the applicant is aware they need to submit a full site plan for review.

Witham stated he knows the applicant. He stated he has been familiar with the project and has had discussion with the applicant about the project. He stated he has no financial ties to the project, the applicant is not family and does not feel he needs to recuse himself. He stated if any Board member feels he should he will though.

Riotto introduced the project and opportunity. He stated their proposal is for a 143,000 sf, climate controlled, state of the art, indoor sports universe. He stated they are seeking input from the Board in regards to the building height which will be a 90' ceiling. He stated the land is zoned for Commercial Industrial, but at 90' they are well over the 35' maximum height requirement. He stated there are other structures like these in the seacoast area.

Ball stated the proposal is to construct this dome behind the existing Hilltop Fun Center on the driving range portion of the lot. He stated this site would allow for multiple access points. He stated the purpose of their attendance tonight is to receive feedback from the Board. He noted they have a team in place which includes a traffic engineer. He stated they are aware that the State has looked into revising the Willand Drive/Rte. 108 intersection. He stated they are looking for feedback in regards to the height of the dome and how it will be higher than the surrounding buildings. He stated relief from the height requirements is needed from a board. He noted that there is a footnote of Table 5.A.2 that allows the Board to grant a waiver from the height regulations as long as the building is aesthetically pleasing and proper dimensional regulation requirements to ensure it is safe. He stated he has reviewed the other dome structures in NH. He stated the dome is not a 90' structure that would fall onto other properties; it would simply deflate upon itself.

Aleva stated the project to be constructed behind Hilltop Fun Center, access would be from Willand Drive and the lot is within the Commercial/Industrial Zone. He stated they are seeking input from the Board regarding building height. He stated the dome structure does not have an eave aspect, and

is about 90-100' at its highest point. He stated the current proposal has the building setback 50' from the side required 30' which will allow for and access road and snow storage. He stated they are looking to start a conversation about the height restriction.

Witham stated when the building height restrictions were adopted he would garner that no one involved contemplated a dome structure like this. He stated other things considered were likely public safety and need to access people on upper floors. He stated that is a non-issue here, if it were to catch on fire it would deflate and fall down and therefore a ladder truck is not needed. He stated the proposed location on Route 108 seems appropriate to him and he does not have an issue with the height.

Aleva noted that Hilltop Fun Center has netting at the driving range which is currently held up by poles that are at 93-98' in height.

Rhodes stated the three things he considers for a building with excess height is the increased traffic, public safety and appearance. He stated he thinks this is an appropriate location for a building like this. He stated he will be looking for abutter comments to hear their concerns about the dome. He stated public safety, is not as much of a concern for the height, if someone is up there the question will likely be how did they get there rather than how to get them down. He stated for traffic he will be looking to hear from the traffic engineer and how that will be mitigated. He stated he thinks a non-school based athletic field is a need in the area. He will be looking for discussion of how they will deal with snow loads and ensuring it does not affect surrounding properties. He stated he does not have any huge conceptual objections to it.

Richardson question if there is any impact to the flight approach to Skyhaven Airport. He stated he does think this is a wonderful project.

Aleva stated the Hampshire Hills dome that experiences snow load issues is about 20 years old and the newer technology/model they look at have controls to increase pressure if they know a storm is coming. He stated the system is stronger now as well. He stated they are outside of the flight path area. He stated they can also get a clarification on that. He suggested that they can also schedule a site visit to the Hampshire Hills site.

Richardson stated the personally thinks this is one of the best things to happen in this area if it comes to fruition. He stated it is not the kind of structure people were thinking of when the regulations were made.

Horton complimented Riotto's passion. He stated the location is perfect for the use. He stated he does not think the height restriction considered a dome structure and he has no issue given that people should not be on top of the dome. He stated it could be a great asset for the City.

Barry stated he thinks this is a great project and would be great for the City. He stated he thinks the proposed location is great and does not have an issue with the height.

Guptill stated the projects seems like it would be good. He stated he is interested in hearing from abutters about the height being that it is almost three times the current height restriction. He stated he is also interested in hearing of the traffic impact and mitigation. He inquired what happens if it loses pressure and the rate of decent.

Riotto stated it is about 15 minutes to evacuate and there are about 8 emergency exits. He stated the manufacture makes note that there has not been a death in a dome structure.

Witham suggested it would be good for Board members to check out the netting poles in place at Hilltop Fun Center for reference. He stated he thinks they are going to need to focus on the traffic issue. He noted that Route 108 has been within the DOT 10 year plan for many years but it is getting closer to being re-done. He stated as part of that which is engineering on going, and that intersection was close to meeting traffic signal warrants. He noted that they will be looking at how stormwater is being addressed but also noted there are great soils out there.

Robidas stated he thinks the project would be unique for the community. He noted the biggest thing he would be looking at is the infrastructure and getting people in and out of the site.

Ball stated they will be working with a traffic engineer and looking into the intersection closely. He looks forward to completing the planning process.

**B) Trio Investments, LLC, is seeking an extension of the Planning Board approval for the increase in assembly allowance and hours of operation property located at 49 Market Street, in the Business with Historic Overlay (BH) District, Assessor's Map 11 Lot 78, SITE#09-2016**

**Sara Nadeau** was remotely in attendance to represent Trio Investments, LLC and the request.

Mears stated the Hall of Great Falls reached out requested an extension for the off-site improvement cost share. They are requesting an additional year to pay the \$2,500 for the crosswalk sign due to the pandemic and impact to being able to operate their business.

Belmore stated in regards to the email his only question was what the \$500 credit that is being referenced.

Mears stated she believed that is the landscaping surety but she can confirm.

Belmore stated he would be in favor to grant the extension, business has been slow as indicated.

Robidas stated he would agree with Belmore, COVID picked up in March and he personally knows several people who had large weddings who ultimately canceled. He stated it would be fair to extend the requirement.

Rhodes stated he echoed the comments and the pandemic has been hard on a lot of businesses. He stated he is pleased to see they are still looking to move forward. He would be in support of an extension.

Guptill stated he agrees and is ready to make a motion.

MOTION: Guptill stated, I move that the request of Trio Investments for a 12 month extension of the payment due for the offsite exaction related to the pedestrian crossing if High Street (COA 2.6 of the 11/20/19 approval) be APPROVED.

The MOTION is SECONDED by Robidas.

The MOTION CARRIES by a 9-0 roll call vote.

- C) Any new business that may come before the Board.
  - i) No new business.

**November 18, 2020 PB Minutes**

5. WORKSHOP BUSINESS

A) No workshop business.

6. COMMUNICATIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS

Witham noted that it appears there are used car sales commencing at the former Kia site. He noted that it is not an allowed use.

**MOTION:** Robidas MOTION to ADJOURN.

Guptill SECONDS the motion.

The MOTION CARRIES by a 9-0 roll call vote at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dana Crossley, Planning Secretary