

**SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
January 20, 2021**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jason Barry, Bob Belmore-City Manager, David Witham, City Council Representative and Mark Richardson, Alternate, Harold Guptill- Vice Chair, Paul Robidas Keith Perkins – Alternate and Chris Horton, Jeremy Rhodes (5:36)

**EXCUSED MEMBERS:** Ron LeHoullier, Chair

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

The Meeting was called to order at 5:30 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: **Guptill, Robidas, Barry, Horton, Witham, Belmore, Rhodes (5:36PM) and Richardson** were in attendance remotely. **Perkins** was in attendance at City Hall Council Chambers. Director Mears and Secretary Crossley were also present remotely.

Guptill appointed Richardson and Perkins as a full voting members for the meeting.

1. **Approval of the minutes of the meeting of December 16, 2020**

**Motion:** Robidas MOVED to accept the minutes.

Seconded by Richardson.

The MOTION CARRIED by a 7-0-2 roll call vote. (Perkins abstained and Rhodes did not vote)

2. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Land Use Board Reports (ZBA, HDC, Conservation Commission, SRTC, Minor Field Reports):**  
No Comments.

**City Council Report:** Witham stated the National Guard, located at the corner of Blackwater Road and Maple Street, will be vacating the property in order to consolidate operations to fewer sites. He stated in result the property will be turned back over to the City of Somersworth. He stated the Mayor has formed a small working committee to look at the possible re-use options.

Witham reported the Fire Station project continues to move forward. He stated work on site has consisted of the boundary line assessment, site survey and environmental assessment of the site and building. He noted that Port One Architects and Harvey Construction continue to work through the administrative pre-construction processes related to the project.

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Witham stated the Council has bonded the Cemetery Road Complete Streets Project. He stated it will go out to bid hopefully by the end of the month. He stated Wright Pierce is the engineer for that project. Construction is anticipated in to start in the spring.

Witham stated they have received bids for the current fiscal year road resurfacing. He stated the 3 bids are being reviewed by staff to ensure the details are accurate as submitted.

Belmore stated included in the packet is the Land Use Board report and he does not have any question on that report.

Witham noted the Council approved a Zoning Ordinance Amendment in regards to apiculture (bee keeping). He stated it is fairly regulated but they feel it is an appropriate starting point for those people who want to engage in bee keeping.

Horton congratulated the City Manager and Staff on the acceptance of the grant to clean up the old Police Station.

Witham added kudos to City staff for seeking out grant funds and thinks it will be a positive move in re-development (and resale) of the old Police Station.

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

### 5. WORKSHOP BUSINESS

#### A) **Update Site Plan Review and Subdivision Regulations: Wetland conditional use permit**

Mears stated Conservation Commission and previous Director Saunders, worked on a Zoning Ordinance update of Section 13 Riparian and Wetland Buffer District Ordinance. She stated that has been reviewed by the Public Works and Environments Committee, Conservation Commission and City attorney and will go before Council for approval. She stated the reason for the update is to remove redundant language that is covered in the NH RSAs, removal and rewording of ambiguous language and other protection updates. She stated a recommendation that came from the review by the City attorney is to move the 'Site Plan Requirements' language from the ordinance and place into the Site and Subdivision regulations. She stated she has provided that language for the Board to look over tonight.

Belmore clarified that the Conservation Commission did a lot of work on this Zoning change. He stated after it went to the PWE, he had the City Attorney review it. He stated the Attorney cleaned it up a bit more and asked for a few changes but no substantial changes since the PWE committee endorsed it. He stated they expect to schedule the Zoning Ordinance on the next Council agenda for first read. He stated for the Site and Subdivision revisions, that is on track to receive comments from the Board tonight and should be scheduled for a public hearing at an upcoming meeting. He stated he did not have questions at this time.

Rhodes explained some of the reasoning behind the proposed changes. He noted the language was old and did not focus on the more prominent wetlands that exist in Somersworth. He stated they removed the tree count requirement as they were granting waivers for the consistently regardless. He noted the buffer language was cleaned up and language regarding impervious surface was also clarified. He stated he believes this update will make the review process easier for the Board members and developers.

Witham noted that he was part of the PWE Committee review. He stated that Scott Orzechowski, Conservation Commission Chairman, did an excellent job outlining the details and rational, as Rhodes also just did. He stated this is not making the regulations more restrictive for developers but rather clearer for developers. He stated he views this as a positive change that makes sense for the community.

MOTION: Belmore stated, I move to accept the proposal and move it forward to a public hearing to be scheduled on the next Planning Board agenda.

The MOTION is SECONDED by Witham.

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

**6. COMMUNICATIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS**

**A) Fidelity Committee Request:**

Mears stated the Fidelity Committee submitted a request to review the local Zoning Ordinance for barriers to affordable housing and remove those.

Belmore stated the intent is that he will work with Staff and any ideas the Board members they should submit those to the Director. He stated other than what the letter indicates asks that the Board looks at the Ordinance and provide any suggestions.

Witham requested a clarification and educational materials on affordable housing so that he can have a real understanding of the intent and strategies.

Richardson stated in review of this request, he wondered if there was anything in particular the Fidelity Committee has in mind and what they consider to be barriers. He suggested a presentation to the Planning Board with the Fidelity Committee's ideas of the barriers.

Belmore stated they will reach out to the Fidelity Committee for either a presentation or sharing of documents. He noted in his perspective there is plenty of Section 8 housing but would like more clarity on the housing speciation's they are looking for.

- B) Mears stated included in the Board's packet is a public notice from the Rollinsford Zoning Board of Adjustment. She stated this is for the Flatly Company who is looking to complete development similar to the one constructed on Royal Drive within the Rollinsford portion of their lot. She stated it will be reviewed by the Rollinsford Zoning Board on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The project would be accessed from Somersworth.

Horton inquired if the Rollinsford Board deemed this a project of regional impact.

Belmore asked for information from Strafford Regional Planning on their roll in a regional impact project and any input they have.

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Robidas highlighted the aspects that make this a regional impact project in his opinion, public safety, traffic, water and sewer.

There was a brief discussion on the Regional Impact determination process and procedure. The Board expressed concern of the impact to Somersworth with this project.

Mears explained the regional impact review process.

Horton inquired if the best course of action is to issue a letter to the Rollinsford Zoning Board with the concerns of this Board.

Belmore stated he would shy away of that, they have specific criteria for the review but does feel a letter would be appropriate to the Planning Board when the time comes.

Witham questioned if this project moves forward to development, in order to supply water/sewer to another community would an Inter-Municipal agreement be required.

Belmore stated that he is under clear direction from Council that water will not be provided to another community without an Inter-Municipal agreement in place. He stated the Rollinsford Selectmen would need to work with City Council to develop an agreement.

Guptill clarified the Board would like Director Mears to reach out to SRPC for advice on moving forward.

Witham stated absent a letter, the Board has had an open and public discussion in regards to their opinion of the development and Staff has heard these comments.

**MOTION:** Robidas MOTION to ADJOURN.

Belmore SECONDS the motion.

The MOTION CARRIES by a 9-0 roll call vote at 6:03 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dana Crossley, Planning Secretary