

**SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
November 17, 2021**

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

Excused Members: Keith Perkins

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

The Meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

1. Approval of the minutes of the meetings of October 20, 2021 (workshop and regular)

Motion: Robidas MOVED to accept the minutes of October 20, 2021 CIP Workshop.

The MOTION is SECONDED by Horton.

The MOTION CARRIED by an 8-0-1 vote, Guptill abstained.

Motion: Guptill MOVED to accept the minutes of October 20, 2021 regular meeting.

The MOTION is SECONDED by Robidas.

The MOTION CARRIED by 9-0

2. COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

City Council Report: Witham reported that the Cemetery Road project base pavement is done along the entire roadway. He stated they continue to work on the curbing and weather permitting finishing sidewalks. The final finish items will be completed in the spring. The Fire Station project is moving along, the foundation was delayed due to some soil analysis but expect to start that in a couple of weeks. They continue to get the site ready for work and plan to have phase 1 complete by mid-summer of 2022. The Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade project is into the punch list items, by in large a complete project. Working with staff on training for the new equipment. Eversource conducted review of those upgrades and should expect a rebate from Eversource that will go towards offsetting the Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade.

Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) Update: Richardson stated the meeting is on Friday but he will not be able to attend but will report based on their minutes.

3. OLD BUSINESS

A. Any old business that may come before the Board.

No other old business.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Coastal Architects is seeking a Conceptual Review for a proposed subdivision on a property located at 271 High Street, in the Residential Duplex (R2) District, Assessor's Map 15 Lot 16A, SUB#08-2021

Mears stated the applicant is before the Board for a conceptual review of their proposed project to subdivide a 12 acre parcel with access from High St. This lot had previously received subdivision in 2006 for an 11 lot subdivision, but failure to meet completion deadlines the subdivision was revoked in 2018.

LeHoullier noted there would be no decision or action on this item, discussion only.

Brian Rodonets of Coastal Architects was in attendance to represent the prospective buyer (Anji Reddy) and the proposal.

Rodonets stated the project did get approvals a number of years ago and at this point his client is looking to do an affordable housing project as there is a need for this in the community and State. He stated they are looking for twelve lots, the lot has about 5.1 acres of wetlands which is an impact on the property. He stated they can potentially put 12 lots that are mostly conforming to the requirements of the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance, some of the lots meet the 80' frontage but a number have only 60'-75' of frontage. He stated there is a 25' entrance to the site that would lead to a cul-de-sac, would not impact any of the wetlands with this proposal. He stated this would be a nice project to see done in affordable housing as it would be 12 duplexes (24 units). He stated they are looking for feedback on their proposed concept.

Richardson inquired the layout of the duplexes and if they would have separate entrances. Rodonets stated they would be side by side units with separate entrances for each unit.

Witham noted more than half of the lots do not meet the required frontage, is that to maximize the number of lots to make the project work.

Rodonets stated the figures are tight with doing affordable housing, there is a density they would like to meet to make the project work.

Witham clarified if there would be one driveway per lot.

Rodonets stated they are looking at having one parking spot per unit, with additional off street parking.

Witham stated items he would be looking for when this would be before the Board for review, he appreciates that there is sidewalks, this would be an appropriate area for sidewalks being close to the schools and downtown area. With sidewalks would want curbing and would not be in favor of lesser curbing than the required granite curbing. Underground utilities are required and important in a tight subdivision like this. There is often discussion of site lighting, would like to see a light at the cul-de-sac and at the intersection of this entrance and High St. The lots listed as 1-2-3-4, the backyards would abut the High Street residential properties and would like to see a good buffer between those lots and this project, natural or natural and fencing in order to be a good neighbor.

Mears noted that the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance allows for the Planning Board to grant relief to allow smaller lots or frontage for a percentage of lots.

Rodonets stated granite curb and underground utilities would be difficult to do with affordable housing in order to keep rents down, would be looking at the income of the tenants which would track back to the building and site work costs.

Witham stated there is a waiver process.

Rodonets stated they would be applying a dark sky approach for the lighting on the site. Want to ensure the site feels safe at night but also to be compliant with dark sky.

Robidas stated he does not think he would be in favor of a waiver from the granite curb requirement, typically only granted when it is for the purpose of drainage. On the lots with the frontage size, would like to see that get closer to the regulation requirements possibly to pull a lot to make the lots more compliant.

Rodonets stated in reviewing the costs, to remove a lot would remove two living units and that would have an impact to the bottom line, would have to talk with client to see about how the project would work.

Belmore stated he would not be in favor of waiving the frontage requirement, granite curbing, underground utilities and not sure the current parking proposal is compliant. He noted they cannot control what the property owner charges for rents, in those terms have to consider the development in long term, cannot control what is charged for rent or who owns the development, concern of the waivers and parking.

LeHoullier requested if this does come before the Board for review would like to see historic minutes included in the Board's packet. Knows there was concern of flooding and problem with traffic due to the rise of the road including Cumberland Farms and Horne St. intersection. He inquired if the property would be condo units or owner occupied. If not owner occupied a management company involved.

Rodonets stated they would be rentals and likely a management company involved. He explained they are attempting to serve the low income housing market that is underserved.

LeHoullier noted his concern is upkeep of the property and absentee landlords.

There was a discussion of the ownership model for the project.

Rhodes stated he lives on Garden Street which is near this location. He stated the concept of absentee landlords, there are a number of developments on Green St. and Franklin with them and maintenance and upkeep are consistent concerns with those. If this project is to be an investment properties for absentee landlords, there is nothing wrong with that but would want to see ironclad maintenance agreements that was enforceable by the City within the project approval. It is something that the City wrestles with that creates a lot of issues for many people. Granite curbing is a safety and maintenance issue, other forms of curbing are typically approved for developments with low traffic, this would not qualify or odd situations, and he would not support a waiver for it. He stated in regards to underground utilities, considers in the same category. Frontage definitely respects concerns of waiving but does feel they need to consider these types of developments, but there needs to be justification that is well developed, plan should address appropriate parking and safe traffic flow. Would serve an underserved market but needs to be done correctly and does have a number of concerns. He suggested the applicant work with the abutters to find out any concerns from those properties before they come before the Board.

Horton noted his comments and thoughts are in line with the others stated. He elaborated he would be a no vote on allowing smaller lot size because it would have an impact on surrounding areas such as the wetland and overall density of the layout of the site. No vote on a waiver from granite curbing or underground utilities. He noted the lot size compared to having only single car driveways, the overflow would end up with on street parking which creates more of a problem during the winter. He stated the lot size would have challenges with layout being so small.

Rodonets stated he understand the two driveways, some units can be worked with easier than others and work with the balance.

Goodwin asked for clarification on assurances the City would have that the project would be low-income housing, there is nothing in the City's ordinances that controls that if they were to grant waivers in support of low income housing. Is there a way to deed restrict it, because it would be the only way that he would be comfortable with any of the waivers being discussed if the City is protected as well.

Rodonets stated deed restrictions are common.

Mears stated the City does not have affordable housing in the ordinance nor a standard for deed restrictions for this manner. Would have to review the application based on the existing ordinances and regulations.

Belmore stated in general for granting waivers the Board likes to be consistent. He has a real concern with the parking, especially with the snow, needs bigger lots and the parking areas should be paved that can accommodate four cars.

Rhodes suggested the applicant review the condo development off Green Street on Stillwater Circle/Meadow Way.

Richardson stated affordable housing and low income housing are two different things but both terms have been used. The Sunningdale Development was presented to them as affordable housing when it was before them. Does not know the level of affordable housing they mean in this instance. Rodonets stated he would need to come back to the Board with that information, it will depend on the development costs and trying to make the figures work for low income housing.

There was a continued discussion of low income housing.

Witham stated the City aims to maintain a positive image of the developments, not only short term but long term. There is often discussion of upkeep of developments, if there is nice road and sidewalks with good curb appeal people are more likely to keep up their property. The parking is important as well, the Public Works and Environment Committee has been looking into how to prevent and limit the amount of people who park on their lawns, if not enough is provided that is what will happen. Understands there is a need for this level of housing but if they are to grant waivers, there needs to be a level of income for the rental market they are serving in something like a deed restriction.

Goodwin added that the terminology is the HUD incomes and there is a yearly document that is published and can be viewed to help determine the level they are meeting.

B. Courtesy Review of the Tri City Warming Center Site for a property located at 30 Willand Drive, in the Commercial Industrial (CI) District, Assessor's Map 43 Lot 1H

Mears stated the property will continue to operate as an Emergency Cold Weather Warming Center at 30 Willand Drive during the period of 11-29-21 through 04-01-2022. The Planning Board reviewed the initial project in December of 2020 those minutes were shared with the Board along with a copy of the As-Builts of the site.

Belmore stated the City Council has authorized an amended operating agreement and it will continue to operate the same but with extended hours. Dover and Rochester have also approved the agreements, CAP will operate the facility with paid staff and volunteers. The agreement addresses Dover selling the property after this time frame and the funds from the sale to be utilized for a new purchase or build of a facility.

Witham noted he felt there was a significant change in use at the site going from being open only during extreme weather to be open with expanded hours that it warranted a review by the Planning Board, as the Board reviews items such as the new Fire Station and upgrades to the Waste Water Treatment Facility.

Belmore stated some of the items that were discussed last year were implemented, security cameras, fencing between this use and the mobile home park, dumpster that is secured and emergency generator. Looking for recommendations from the Board if they feel there are other items that would enhance the facility.

Guptill stated this site was developed in the recent years and feels the Board did an extensive review at the time and does not have any recommendations at this time.

Robidas stated he feels the egress points are adequate along with parking lot, the building looks like what they would require today and no recommended changes.

Horton stated he appreciates this coming before the Board for the courtesy review, no additional comments to add, street lighting was addressed.

Rhodes stated he has no changes to note for the property. He added in regards to Dover looking to sell the property and use the funds for a suitable solution, operating this site closer to a full time shelter is the best of a possible bad choice and there were no good solution for the crisis that exists. Without the presence of a facility like this people would freeze to death, operating this as an overnight shelter full time throughout the week works well, but terrible physical location. Would like to see Dover get this property sold and there be a more appropriate shelter location.

Horton stated those were excellent words from Rhodes and agrees, this is a necessity that needs to be provided but not a great location, looks to the Cities working together to find a better location.

LeHoullier questioned if this shelter services only people from the Tri-Cities or expanded region.

Belmore stated it is first come first serve and cannot discriminate where people are coming from.

Witham explained that CAP does data collect during this process and it is not uncommon to see people that come from Portsmouth or Manchester as this is a State and National issue. He agreed that Rhodes hit the nail on the head, it is not a hard decision that there is a need for a shelter but the questions was where it would best be located. He did drive by the site during the day and night and noted that there needs to be site lighting during dark hours to ensure safety. Also did not see a number sign on the building for the address.

5. WORKSHOP BUSINESS –

Mears stated none.

6. COMMUNICATIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS

A. Horton stated he recently went by the Patriot Tractor Supply site at night and found that the lights hit him directly in the face. Requested that they be notified to ensure their lighting is down lit and shielded.

B. Guptill inquired on the status of the Dome project.

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Mears stated she recently met with the developer who intends to have final plans to the City in January and start moving forward with project. She stated she could report more in January.

MOTION: Guptill MOTION to ADJOURN.

Robidas SECONDS the motion

The MOTION CARRIES by a 9-0 vote at 7:26pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dana Crossley, Planning Secretary