

**SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 19, 2017**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ron LeHoullier, Chair, Bob Belmore, City Manager, Jeremy Rhodes, Paul Robidas, Jameson Small, Alternate and Mark Fearis, Alternate.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Harold Guptill, Vice Chair, David Witham, City Council Representative, Chris Horton, Mark Richardson and Aaron Fournier.

STAFF PRESENT: Shanna B. Saunders, Director of Planning and Community Development and Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

LeHoullier appointed Fearis and Small as voting members for tonight's meeting.

1) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Robidas moved to accept the minutes of the meeting of March 15, 2017.

Seconded by Rhodes. Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

2) COMMITTEE REPORTS

ZBA Report

See attached.

City Council Report

None.

Site Review Technical Committee Report

See attached.

Minor Field Modification Report

See attached.

Strafford Regional Planning Commission Update

Fearis stated that the SRPC has been busy and that their 2016 annual report is available. Stated that they started scoring for the 10-year plan and there is another meeting on that. Stated that they have a draft of the public transit plan which focuses on transportation planning. Stated that there was an article the NH Business Review that talks about breathing new life into vacant buildings and that he has copies of that.

Saunders stated that the SRPC is also working on an Economic Development Strategy and that she may bring a draft to the Board.

Vision 2020 Committee Report

None.

Belmore stated that there is a national campaign to improve City parks and that there is a website you can visit to vote for a Somersworth City park. Stated that there are links to this website on the City's websites. Stated that the winner gets a \$20,000 grant to improve a park.

3) **OLD BUSINESS**

- A) Goodwin Community Health is seeking site plan approval for a building addition on property located at 311 Route 108, in the Commercial Industrial (CI) District, Assessor's Map 48, Lot 24E, SITE #01-2017.

Saunders stated that the Planning Board asked Goodwin Community Health to have a meeting with the City, COAST Bus and the NHDOT and they did meet. Stated that there are questions on research that needs to be done so they have requested to remain on the table for more work on that.

Motion: Robidas moved that the request of Goodwin Community Health for a site plan for a building addition be **TABLED** until the May 17, 2017 meeting, at the applicant's request.

Seconded by Rhodes. Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

4) **NEW BUSINESS**

- A) Velcro USA is seeking site plan approval with waivers to install a solar panel system on property located at 300 Route 108, in the Commercial Industrial (CI) District, Assessor's Map 47, Lot 01, SITE #02-2017.

Saunders referred to her memo and stated that outstanding issues include screening of the array and underground utilities. Stated that the SRTC overlooked sidewalks but she recommends that the Board treat this as they do other development on Route 108.

Brian Ramsey of Velcro USA represented the applicant and addressed the Board. Stated that they are proposing a 1400KW solar array that will supply 10% a year of kilowatt power to Velcro.

Rick Dolce with CLD Consulting Engineers, Inc. represented the applicant and addressed the Board. Stated that only about 12 acres of the property are developed now and that they studied about 17 more for this proposal. Stated that the area is relatively flat with a large lawn and a wooded area. Stated that the panels will take up about six acres of land and referred to Sheet C4 that shows what trees need to be removed so there is no shade cast. Stated that there will be no clearing of trees within the 100 foot wetland buffer. Stated that the array is not an impervious structure like a building. Stated that they looked at the soils in the area and that there is good drainage. Stated that they will add a drainage swale to help contain storm flows. Referred to Sheet T1 and stated that there are no issues with truck turning. Stated that the access road will be pervious soils with some crushed stone. Stated that there will be a black, chain-link fence for security and was recommended by the solar company. Stated that there are concerns with plantings and that they will have 12 arborvitaes to screen the operation panels. Referred to Sheet C5 and stated that the powerlines run overhead.

Ramsey referred to Sheet C5 and stated that they are looking for a waiver for overhead utilities.

Public hearing closed 6:48 pm.

LeHoullier asked if this application would violate anything from the original site plan.

Saunders stated that she didn't find anything that would be effected.

Robidas stated that they talked at SRTC about the power lines being on poles above ground and asked them to expand on that.

Ramsey stated that overhead poles are more cost effective and they would have to open up the property to have underground utilities. Stated that they would be adding poles behind the vegetation and that additional poles will be needed due to the way the property is interconnected. Stated that they have four metering points, which is uncommon, and they want to consider one metering point. Stated that some of it will be overhead and some underground.

Motion: Robidas moved that the request of Velcro USA, Inc. for a site plan to install a solar array be **ACCEPTED AS COMPLETE**.

Seconded by Fearis. Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

Belmore asked about the waiver request for the identification of trees and what the recommendation for that is.

Saunders stated that the regulations require that trees greater than a 12" caliper be identified on the plans and the applicant is requesting a waiver from having to do that. Stated that the request is supported.

Tree Size Waiver Motion: Rhodes moved that the request of Velcro USA, Inc. for a waiver from Section 9.15 of the Site Plan Review Regulations regarding the identification of trees greater than 12" caliper be **APPROVED**.

Seconded by Robidas. Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

The Board discussed the landscape waiver request.

Robidas stated that the SRTC discussed landscaping and that they may not want to require all the screening so that the array can be visible. Stated that the SRTC wanted a view of the property from the road. Stated that he would like to see this granted.

Belmore stated that he is not sure he is in favor of this and asked what they would be giving up. Stated that there are a lot of solar arrays in this community and asked what they would be giving up with this one. Stated that this Board has always been in favor of landscaping and that he is not sure of the public benefit of waiving it here. Stated that he would like to know more on this. Stated that he would rather see trees and landscaping than the array.

Saunders stated that they talked about fencing around the array and referred to Sheet C5. Stated that it will be a chain-link, see-through fence. Stated that they did discuss landscaping but that the applicant wants to keep it opaque. Stated that the SRTC seemed okay with that and that it will be nice for the public to view the array.

Ramsey stated that the intent is to embrace the solar array as being progressive and reach out to the City. Stated that they want to promote the array instead of hide it.

Rhodes stated that with most projects he agrees with Belmore and they want more landscaping but in this case the use is progressive and should be encouraged. Stated that the use should be advertised and pushed forward.

Belmore stated that he read that Velcro wants to welcome public engagement but that he has gotten luke-warm responses on that. Stated that the City embraces solar technology and

recently voted to exempt the use from taxation. Stated that he would want more community engagement than just being able to see the array. Asked if there is some way to work together and have more landscaping.

Small echoed Belmore's comments and stated that he feels the project is great and trees don't really go good with solar but asked if there are room for hedges or something.

Ramsey stated that they would maintain the existing landscaping. Stated that they intend to maintain grass in the front and embrace the array itself. Stated that it may be possible to do some vegetation but that he didn't consider that.

Landscape Plan Waiver Motion: Rhodes moved that the request of Velcro USA, Inc. for a waiver from Section 11.6.e of the Site Plan Review Regulations regarding a landscape plan be **APPROVED**.

Seconded by Robidas for conversation purposes.

Robidas asked Belmore if he has any suggestions on what he would like to see there for landscaping and maybe have a happy medium.

Belmore stated that he is not a landscape architect and doesn't deal in landscape design and thought the applicant should have options.

LeHoullier stated that the waiver request can be tabled.

Robidas stated that he would be okay with that. Stated that he wants to still see the array but have more vegetation. Stated that he feels there is a happy medium.

Rhodes stated that he is not opposed to having some landscaping.

Motion failed with a 2-4 vote with Rhodes and Belmore in favor.

LeHoullier told the applicant to come back with a landscape plan.

The Board discussed the utility waiver request.

Saunders stated that there is a run of above ground utility poles and that they are proposing seven new poles. Stated that if the Board grants the waiver request there should be specific reasons as to not set a precedent.

Robidas asked for more information and if they can go underground.

Ramsey stated that they cannot go totally underground and that they have to have four poles added to meet Eversource and National electrical regulations.

Fearis asked which poles are absolutely necessary.

Dolce referred to Sheet C5.

Ramsey stated that they need to interconnect and that the poles that run north/south are necessary. Stated that there will be little impact on Route 108 and that the poles will hide in with the trees.

Robidas asked for feedback from Eversource that there has to be poles. Stated that he would like an explanation on why this has to be above ground.

Small asked if the connection is at the four poles on the southeast corner.

Ramsey stated that there are three location and showed on the plans.

Small asked how far a trench would run.

Ramsey stated about 600 feet.

Saunders suggested that it may be more than that.

Robidas stated that this is being tabled anyway because of the landscaping waiver request and stated that he may want to do there here to get information from Eversource.

Saunders stated that Eversource usually likes above ground but that they can explain the technicalities.

Belmore asked how many poles there will be in total.

Ramsey replied eight and stated they will be parallel to Route 108.

Saunders stated that they discussed this at length at SRTC and they agreed to disagree.

Fearis stated that it seems like underground is an aesthetic feature and that he would like to see some alternatives. Stated that it is in the regulations for a reason and worries this could open a can of worms.

Underground Utilities Waiver Motion: Robidas moved that the request of Velcro USA, Inc. for a waiver from Section 11.3.b of the Site Plan Review Regulations regarding underground utilities be **TABLED**.

Seconded by Rhodes. Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

Site Plan Motion: Robidas moved that the request of Velcro USA, Inc. for a site plan to install a solar array be **TABLED** until the May 17, 2017 Planning Board meeting.

Seconded by Fearis.

Belmore suggested a middle ground on the landscaping.

Robidas suggested a few less utility poles.

Ramsey stated that it was relayed to him that it was one way or the other due to the existing infrastructure.

Belmore stated that this is a great project and that he is in favor of solar but he just want to see some more options.

Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

5) **WORKSHOP BUSINESS**

A) Discussion on Site Plan Review Regulations proposed amendments.

Saunders stated that this was discussed at the workshop meeting prior to this meeting and that she will rewrite the draft and bring it back to the Board in May.

B) Any other workshop business that may come before the Board.

None.

6) COMMUNICATION AND MISCELLANEOUS

Fearis asked what is going on with the gas station in front of Walmart. Stated that the Board acted on it but that it looks abandoned and worse than before.

Saunders stated that she thinks they are still moving forward but will get a timeline.

Fearis asked about the laundromat on Tri City Road. Stated that there sometimes seems to be a lag after the Board approves a project.

LeHoullier asked when the second left turn lane will be going in as part of the Dairy Queen project.

Saunders stated that they are trying to reprogram the existing light but the controller needs to be replaced. Stated that they are hoping to open by Memorial Day.

Belmore mentioned that the City Council approved the moratorium waiver for a right turn lane out of Tri City Road.

Saunders stated that Cumberland Farms had a pre-construction meeting this week and that they are moving forward with the project. Stated that they don't have a driveway permit yet. Stated that she received copies of deeds regarding wetland information for 12 Month, LLC so that condition of approval is satisfied. Stated that the platform at Roger's Auto Body is gone now.

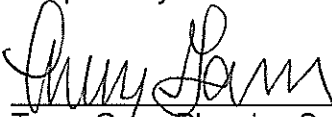
Robidas asked Saunders to check on the landscaping requirements.

Motion: Robidas moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Rhodes. Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted:



Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary
Somersworth Planning Board