

April 6, 2022 Planning Board

Present were: Regular Members: Chair Lori Langlois, Tom McCue, Suzanne Wasileski, Anthony Valliere, and Dan Whittet (on Zoom); **Ex-Officio members:** Lucie Remillard and Lise Barrette; **Alternate Members:** Henry Noel, Jeffrey Quackenbush and Karen Collins.

Excused were: Regular members: Brian Valerino; **Alternate Members:** Jennifer Lazzaro and Amy George.

Others Present: Pamela Laflamme, Community Development Director, William Carroll, Daily Sun; Anthony Cocca and Bill Schroeder of Cocca Development (on Zoom).

Chair Langlois called the meeting to order and appointed Alternate Members Henry Noel and Jeffrey Quackenbush as voting members.

Public Comments

None

Approval of April 2022 minutes

Mr. McCue said there was an error in Mr. Bachner's name, it's actually Micah not Mike. Ms. Remillard made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 2022 meeting with the correction of Micah's name under Others Present and under Other. Ms. Wasileski seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Site Plan Review – Design Review – Tax Map 119 Lot 241; 173 Pleasant Street – Mareld Company Inc.

Mr. Cocca began the presentation by explaining the plans for the new Pharmacy Building. The building encompasses approximately 2,500 square feet with 16 parking spaces. There will be access off of Pleasant and York Street and the front of the building faces York Street. There will be a drive through where the traffic pattern will go around to the back of the building.

Mr. Quackenbush asked what the purpose was to building a new Walgreen's when there was already one across the street. Mr. Cocca explained that when a store is not making it financially they would usually just close down but, in this situation, they felt it would benefit the community if they would open a pharmacy only. There was other discussion about the adding of more parking spaces, the surrounding parking lot, creation of more dead space, and how many parking spaces are required by the City Ordinance.

Ms. Remillard asked if it was possible to make the main entrance on the Pleasant Street side. Mr. Cocca said they had originally tried that design but it wouldn't fit in the space of the lot.

Mr. Whittet said he liked the nice, clean, modern design but he would also like to keep the feeling of our downtown historic streetscape. There was discussion around the color, walkability, and different varieties of styles.

Mr. McCue asked what was between the parking spaces along the Pleasant Street side and the sidewalk. Mr. Schroeder said it was standard concrete curb at the front of each parking space. There was additional discussion about the vehicle traffic flow and the pedestrian flow, the construction company to do the work, lighting and snow storage space.

After some more discussion around the parking spaces, Ms. Laflamme read from the ordinance. The minimum parking spaces for this structure would be 13 spaces. The off-street parking requirements may be altered or eliminated by the Planning Board on an individual basis through the Site Plan Review process.

Ms. Barrette asked if there was enough room to put some sort of buffer between the parking spaces and the sidewalk like a grass strip, some bushes or street trees. Mr. Cocca said they can look into doing this.

Mr. Quackenbush explained the he did not like the strip mall look of parking spaces surrounding a small building. He asked if there could be angled parking in the back of the building instead. Mr. Cocca said it would be difficult to have the drive through traffic flow with the parking in the back.

Ms. Wasileski shared her concerns with pedestrian access. Many people will be walking from the Pleasant Street side and it's unclear how they would access the building without walking through traffic flows. After some discussion a crosswalk and pathway were things they would look into incorporating into the plan.

Ms. Langlois asked about the proposed timeline for the project. Mr. Cocca said they were already far into the project and hope to build some time around September.

In closing, Mr. Cocca went through all the suggestions the Board has made. One was to sketch some crosswalks from Pleasant Street to the entrance and possibly eliminating some parking spaces for a crosswalk. Employees could possibly use the public parking lot if needed. Another was to create a grass barrier between the parking spaces and the sidewalk. Next plans will also include their lighting and specifics on the sign.

Mr. Cocca and Mr. Schroeder left the meeting.

There was more discussion amongst the Planning Board members which centered around the sign, parking spaces, use of public parking, pedestrian access, our demographics and needs. Ms. Laflamme said that Mark Lapointe and Jim Wheeler had already looked at the traffic flow a while back and made sure it worked. Members asked again why they are not building it in the same location as the current building is now. Ms. Laflamme said they did not like the layout of placing the building on the corner with parking in the back.

2022 Master Plan Draft Review & Update

Ms. Laflamme gave a brief overview of what Ms. Kelly went through at the last Master Plan meeting. She also said that there was a small change in the first Theme where the word 'unique' is being replaced with 'special'. This change was not shown at the last meeting but it should have been. There was some discussion as to how these themes were decided upon. They were created by gathering all the feedback at the meetings, surveys, committees and the public session. Key elements that were a higher level of importance were then incorporated into the six themes. There was lots of feedback at the meeting which Ms. Kelly will take back and update the draft with. If anyone has any other comments they would like to submit, please email your lists to Ms. Laflamme by the end of the week. The Public Hearing will be scheduled on a City Council meeting night on Monday, June 13th at 6:30. It will then be adopted formally by the Planning Board at the next meeting on Wednesday, July 6th.

Zoning Ordinance amendment continued discussions

Ms. Laflamme explained that there aren't any updates on the Recreational Vehicles or the Manufactured Housing at this time. She hopes that funds will be available July 1st to update our Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Regulations and Subdivision Regulations.

There was some discussion around a recent fire in a recreational vehicle that was parked in someone's driveway and another possible situation where someone is living in a recreational vehicle. This is against the current Zoning Ordinance. The increase of these issues could be due to the current housing shortage.

Other: Lot Merger, Sean Lamontagne, 10 Charron Avenue, Map 112 Lots 75 & 76

These lots sit at the dead end of Charron Avenue. Mr. Lamontagne has approached Code Enforcement with plans for an accessory building. He was told that he had to merge the lots to move ahead with the work. The house sits on Lot 75 and Lot 76 is vacant. Ms. Remillard made a motion to accept the lot merger. Mr. McCue seconded it. All in favor, motion carried.

Other: New Membership List

Ms. Laflamme will be working on updating the membership list. April is membership month and we also need to elect a Chair and Vice Chair. Members who wish to renew their membership will need to resubmit a new letter to the Council showing their interest to remain on the board. Ms. Laflamme acknowledged that Ms. Wasileski will not be renewing her membership and thanked her for her service. Ms. Laflamme announced that Mr. Bosen had resigned from the Planning Board due to his feelings around Senate Bill 249 and the City Council's motion to oppose the bill.

Mr. McCue made a motion to appoint Ms. Langlois as Chair for another term. Ms. Remillard seconded it. All in favor, motion carried.

Ms. Remillard made a motion to appoint Mr. McCue as Vice Chair for another term. Mr. Valliere seconded it. All in favor, motion carried.

Public Comments

None

Member Comments

Mr. McCue asked about the North Country Council survey on housing. He was unable to open the attachment. There are a couple ways of submitting it, scan a printed form, or doing it electronically in a document file.

Mr. McCue shared an issue he was aware of in Chichester NH where someone finished their project and it was different than the site plan that the Planning Board approved. The Planning Board has revoked their approval of the site plan. It will be interesting to see how that pans out.

Mr. McCue also shared that there was an interesting article in the business section of the Union Leader. It's a story on Claremont's Signs of Success on the Road to Revival. It's an interesting read on a similar community.

Mr. Whittet shared that there is a situation in Portsmouth where someone is suing the Planning Board. There was further discussion on how that can actually happen and what the process would look like. Mr. McCue pointed out that NH has a Volunteer Immunity of Liability.

Mr. McCue also mentioned he'd like to see the Rules of Procedure back on the agenda at some point in the future.

Ms. Remillard asked about the Riverwalk project. Ms. Laflamme said the bids are being reviewed by HEB Engineers and then it will be sent to the Department of Transportation. The City Council will then officially award the project to the contractor. Construction will begin in late May.

Ms. Langlois mentioned that there is also a Broadband survey on the Coos County website. If anyone feels that internet access is unaffordable or inaccessible they should complete this survey. Ms. Laflamme will forward this survey and the Housing survey to all members.

There was some discussion around the recent article about the Bitcoin Company in Berlin. It is something that is already up and running. They are not mining the bitcoin but are building the pods for the process. It is located in the same warehouse that the Isaccson's Steel Inc. used to be in.

Mr. Noel asked if there was any update on the Disc Golf project the Board heard about at the last meeting. Ms. Laflamme said there hasn't been anything brought forward yet.

Planner Comments and Project Updates

None

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the board, Mr. McCue made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Valliere. All in favor, the motion carried.

The meeting ended at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lise Barrette

* Note: These minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the Planning Board by motion.