

## **January 10, 2023 Planning Board**

**Present were: Regular Members:** Chair Lori Langlois, Vice-Chair Tom McCue, Henry Noel, Dan Whittet, Larry Laflamme; **Ex-Officio Member:** Lucie Remillard, Lise Barrette;  
**Alternate Members:** Jeffrey Quackenbush, Micah Bachner (arrived 7:00pm), Lori Korzen.

**Excused were: Regular Members:** Anthony Valliere, Karen Collins. **Alternate Member:** Amy George.

**Others Present:** Pamela Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives; Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Chair Langlois called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Introductions were made. Chair Langlois appointed Alternate Members Jeffrey Quackenbush and Lori Korzen as voting members.

### **Public Comments**

None

### **Approval of December 2022 Minutes**

Mr. McCue pointed out an error on Page 4, line 11, it should state 'How to start a business'. Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2022 meeting with the correction. Mr. Whittet seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

### **Public Comments**

None

### **Lot Merger, Robin Rouleau, 18 Demers Street, Map 121 Lots 48 and 49**

Ms. Laflamme shared the map showing the two lots. They are back to back, it's a voluntary merger request by the owner so that they would only get one tax bill. This merger would make the back lot more conforming since it would give it some frontage after the merger. There are not any structures on Lot 49.

Mr. Laflamme asked if this would increase their tax bill. Ms. Barrette explained that when two properties are merged the land is usually lessened in value.

Ms. Laflamme made a motion to accept the merger of Map 121 Lots 48 and 49. Mr. McCue seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Board members discussed the application to create Findings of Fact as follows:

- The lots are back to back
- This is a simple merge requested by the owner
- This will create a single tax bill for the owner

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the Findings of Fact. Ms. Remillard seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

**Other:**

None

**Member Comments**

Mr. Quackenbush shared his second thoughts on the proposal made by Bruce Luksza at the last meeting. He is concerned about how Mr. Luksza's rules will be enforced and that there would not be a Homeowner's Association. Mr. Quackenbush gave some examples of possible situations and wondered if Mr. Luksza is planning on utilizing City resources to enforce his rules and how would this affect things. Ms. Laflamme assured that Mr. Luksza still has many steps to take before he would bring this idea back to the Planning Board. One of those steps does involve review by the Attorney General's office and their attorneys which would clarify many of these issues.

**Planner Comments and Project Updates**

The Housing Grant through Invest NH which is for our Regulatory Review will not be taken on by Resilience Planning & Design. They are unable to take on this project at this time. Ms. Laflamme has a list of vetted consultants which she will be reviewing and will be reaching out to. Asked about more detail on this project, Ms. Laflamme said that Invest NH has funds for two things, one is for Housing Demolitions and the other is for Regulatory Reviews with a focus on housing.

Ms. Remillard asked about the Manufactured Housing regulations that we previously worked on and whether it would be included in this Regulatory Review. Ms. Laflamme said that the Planning Board can still do this and she will bring it to the Board again soon.

Ms. Langlois asked if the Form Based Codes that has been mentioned in the Master Plan Implementation would be included in this Regulatory Review. Ms. Laflamme said yes it will be part of it since it includes housing.

Asked about the Brown School Apartment Project, Ms. Laflamme said that they have just gone through their Environmental Study. They have something they still need to clear with the Community Development Finance Authority and then they will move forward with purchasing.

Mr. McCue shared an upcoming webinar, Planning & Zoning Legislative Primer. Ms. Laflamme will share the information in an email.

**Adjournment**

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

The regular Planning Board meeting ended at 6:55 pm.

## **Master Plan Implementation Committee conversation**

Mr. Whittet made a motion to reapprove the minutes with the correction, which includes the Master Plan portion. Mr. McCue seconded it. All in favor, motion carried.

Ms. Laflamme read through the following Implementation points for Section 1 with discussion as follows.

- 1A.1 Implement asset management programs across departments and facilities  
This is ongoing involving the City Manager, Pollution Control and Public Works. PC has received a grant from DES to assist with a Stormwater Asset Program. Each department head will be involved in some way for their department. As a lot of this work ties in with the CIP, the City Council may be involved.
- 1A.2 Prioritize the renovation of Berlin's public works facility  
Public works has received some funds from the County to build a new Salt Shed. This has been number one priority on their list. There was more discussion among the members around the possibility of building a new Facility.
- 1A.3 Commit to continued funding of water and sewer infrastructure improvements and extensions. There is a Feasibility Study underway with CMA Engineers for the Route 110 project. Will have a substantial update in six weeks. Most of the City has access to water and sewer. There was some concern on whether the Regulatory Revisions will be done in time for the developments on Route 110.
- 1A.4 Fund and complete upgrades to City Hall. At this time the main priority is the chairlift which is unfixable. Different possibilities have been looked into by the City Manager and City Clerk. Mr. Quackenbush asked about Energy Efficient upgrades. Ms. Laflamme said we have had several corporations look at building for energy efficiency, but things have never been implemented. Many of the items for City Hall are in the Capital Improvement Plan.
- 1A.5 Implement the findings of the Library's 2020 building assessment  
Ms. Laflamme will be submitting a Community Development Block Grant in July.
- 1A.6 Proceed with the identified fire station renovation projects  
This has been ongoing. They have already gotten a new boiler, new windows, and there is a roof project in the works to be included in the CIP.
- 1A.7 Fund and complete necessary improvements to the Police/Recreation Department Facility. The Recreation Director has done a lot of updates in the Recreation area. The Police Department continues to do some upgrades. There is another big project that's needed which is to replace the inside sewer and water lines.  
Mr. McCue asked if it's feasible to look into a Public Safety Complex since there are so many large improvements to be made at both the Fire and Police Department. There was some further discussion on this.
- 1A.8 Partner with AVH to fund and replace the Cates Hill Radio Tower  
There are conversations underway between AVH, Police and Fire Departments.
- 1A.9 Complete the necessary upgrades to the existing indoor recreation center.  
This is being worked on by the Recreation Director regularly.

- 1A.10 Begin the process of planning for the construction of a new indoor recreation center or complete significant renovations to the existing facility. This is a long term project which ties in to regular discussion of building a new community center.
- 1A.11 Explore ways to expand capacity and funding for the City's Recreation Department, This is also something the Recreation Director has been working on.
- 1A.12 Repair the City's tennis courts in downtown and at Horne Field  
It has been determined that the tennis court downtown will probably not be repaired. We need to be looking into funds to repair the one at Horne Field.
- 1A.13 Construct an equipment garage at the Berlin Pollution Control  
This is part of their ongoing CIP.
- 1A.14 Replace the terminal building at the Berlin Municipal Airport.  
This is been high on the list for the Airport Authority for a few years in which they have been discussing.
- 1A.15 Support the Solid Waste Department's efforts to reduce household refuse tonnage to the landfill. There are things that everyone can do to help the education and involvement in this effort. One of the Recycling Crew is working hard in educating people. Years ago, we had a grant in which we could supply free bins to all residential properties. Ms. Remillard said that she feels everyone would need at least 3 bins each. We do currently sell bins for \$10 each which were purchased by the City. Mr. Whittet discussed the misconception of recycling procedures and the need for education. There was also some discussion about cardboard which at this time residents can bring them up to the Recycling Facility themselves. Asked about composting programs, Ms. Laflamme explained the possibilities. In some communities they buy special composting receptacles, some residents just do it themselves, some places have projects with local farms, and some have a community program with gardens.
- 1A.16 Participate in regional broadband internet initiatives.  
The City has worked with the North Country Council on this as well as with the Coos County.  
Mr. McCue pointed out that the 1A's are all subject to City Projects and would not be subject to Planning board review. If there were to be any large structure buildings or plans, then as a courtesy the City would take it to the Planning Board for review.
- 1B.1 Adopt a Net Zero Resolution that identifies a multi-pronged strategy to guide all municipal investments in facility and infrastructure upgrades. We currently have the Energy Committee who will need to lead the work to eventually bring to the Council for their support and investment.
- 1B.2 Conduct comprehensive energy resource audits for all municipal structures and land. All of our buildings have gone through energy audits throughout the last 20 years. Mr. Quackenbush asked if those audits are available to review. Ms. Laflamme has a folder with information to give them, but some other departments/buildings may have done some she does not have.
- 1B.3 Pursue the conversions of any remaining public building lights to LED lighting.  
All of the buildings have done the LED projects inside and outside. Our streetlights have also been changed over.

- 1B.4 Research and determine if moving to electric vehicles for the City's municipal fleet is the right path for the City. This would be a Council Policy for the departments, and it will involve the Energy Committee.
- 1B.5 Implement other measures to improve energy efficiency and electrify municipal equipment. Same as 1B.4
- 1B.6 Recognize and coordinate with a citizen group to discuss, research and develop local energy resources. The Energy Committee is currently doing this.
- 1B.7 Identify ways to increase community awareness, workforce development, education, and participation in energy efficiency. This is similar to recycling where we need to get outreach and education to encourage awareness of energy efficiency.
- 1C.1 Adopt a Complete and Green Street Policy and corresponding land use regulations. Complete streets allow for all types of traffic from vehicles, bikes, pedestrian etc. The Riverwalk was done with this in mind. There was discussion about the necessity to expand narrow roadways to make this happen which would involve taking properties. Some of the areas it would not be a practical thing to do. We can work with the local cycling club who has lots of local trails and maps, we have hiking trails, and many walkways. Brand new streets like Route 110 will allow more room to use the complete streets concept. There was some discussion around the pros and cons of complete streets.
- 1C.2 Fund and implement a pavement resurfacing.  
The City is currently doing this. There was a grant available and we are doing a Roadway Surface and Management Survey Program with North Country Council. They are currently gathering information on all our streets regarding condition with a ranking system. This will help in making future decisions to upgrade streets.
- 1C.3 Creatively prioritize roadway improvement projects for the next 5-10 years.  
Same as 1C.2
- 1C.4 Expand the sidewalk network and maintain existing sidewalks more consistently.  
A large part of this involves the plowing of sidewalks. There is a list that states which sidewalks are to be plowed and this has to be approved by the Council. There are limited resources like staff and equipment and snow storage which limits how many sidewalks can be plowed. There have been questions as to why the Riverwalk is maintained. This is because anything that has been built using Federal funds must be plowed and maintained. There was further discussion of commercial buildings who maintain their own sidewalks which is not a requirement in our City.
- 1C.5 Complete the Riverwalk. This is done with only a small punch list left to do. Ms. Remillard reminded Ms. Laflamme to follow through with the geese situation.
- 1C.6 Develop a multi-modal design manual. This is a future project to strive toward.
- 1C.7 Identify site-specific traffic calming and access management improvements throughout the Downtown. This is part of the RAISE project for downtown. The Route 16 project was designed with this in mind and it will continue into downtown. There was discussion also about the new Walgreens green space along the sidewalk. This has been checked and they are following what was initially shown to the Planning Board.
- 1C.8 Update wayfinding signage throughout the City.  
Public Works has already done a large inventory of signs and the Traffic Safety Committee has also done a study. There was a signage committee that has done

some research in some main roadways. There are many signs in bad condition, or missing, and they are not consistent in appearance. Funding needs to be found to assist with this project.

1C.9 Strategically invest in vehicle charging locations within the City.

This is being looked into to include with the Downtown Reconstruction Project through the RAISE grant as well as some other areas in the City. Mr. Whittet shared his concern with charging stations and the need have more power lines underground.

1C.10 Embrace Tactical urbanism strategies. This idea centers around pop up businesses which is for entrepreneurs to have a storefront to put their business into a trial before implementing. There has been discussion about possibly tearing down the medical building at 60 Pleasant Street that was just tax deeded to create a lot for food truck vendors or pop up businesses.

1C.12 Over time, communicate Berlin's commitment to its many municipal assets. Ms. Laflamme shared information about the Citizen's Academies that were held in 2015, 2017 and in 2019. City departments were opened up for residents to tour and learn more about each department. The last one that was held was for candidates for City office. It's on her list to possibly bring back an event for candidates in 2023.

1C.13 Complete public education for large capital improvement projects to garner public support for larger expenditures. The City needs to find ways to communicate with the public which is not controversial platform like social media. Ms. Laflamme is working with NH Listens for some ideas and there is a possible UNH student project which can involve these types of communications. They have already held some community discussion through Marnita's Table at the local college. Mr. Whittet has volunteered to help with this effort.

Mr. Bachner asked about a previous mention of High School students who wanted to cover up the graffiti with art by the students and if this was still going to be done. Ms. Laflamme said the concern was mostly about the railroad trestle on York Street. It is on the list.

Mr. Whittet asked about having the public take part in the Implementation Process. Members are free to invite people who would like to get involved. Ms. Laflamme will advertise to the public that this Implementation Process is open to the public.

Mr. Laflamme asked if the City still have the Youtube Channel. Ms. Laflamme said it does but it hasn't been utilized for a while.

There being no further Master Plan Implementation business to come before the board, Ms. Remillard made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Whittet. All in favor, the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Lise Barrette

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