

May 3, 2023
Planning Board

Present were: Regular Members: Chair Lori Langlois, Vice-Chair Tom McCue, Henry Noel, Anthony Valliere, Dan Whittet, Larry Laflamme (via Zoom); **Ex-Officio Member:** Lucie Remillard; **Alternate Members:** Jeffrey Quackenbush, Micah Bachner

Excused were Regular Members: Lise Barrette, Karen Collins; **Alternate Members:** None

Others Present: Pamela Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives; Shelli Fortin, City Clerk; Stephen Kinney, Capone Iron; Lucie Kinney, Capone Iron; and Eric Grenier, HEB Engineers

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Ms. Langlois appointed Alternate Members Micah Bachner and Jeffrey Quackenbush as voting members to replace the two absent members.

Public Comments

None

Approval of April 4, 2023 Minutes

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 4, 2023 meeting as submitted. Mr. Bachner seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Site Plan Review – Stephen Capone/Capone Iron – Tax Map 140 Lot 20 – Storage Area

Eric Grenier of HEB Engineers gave a brief description of the storage area plan. Mr. Grenier advised that it will provide about 86,000 square feet of storage area for materials on the south side of the property. This includes construction of a gravel storage area. They will be adding a 50-foot-wide driveway on the southwest portion of the site, and widening the existing driveway to 50 feet on the north side as part of the project.

Mr. Grenier advised that for the wellhead protection overlay zone special use permit, there will be no storage of hazardous waste, it will be only be finished product or raw steel. Ms. Laflamme advised that the property has been approved for that use in the past. Mr. Grenier advised that for the special flood hazard overlay zone special use permit, it will not decrease flood storage capacity, and they will be coordinating with Berlin Water Works on the project in the wellhead protection zone.

Mr. Grenier advised they are working with NHDES on the wetlands permit, which is pending at this time.

Mr. Valliere made a motion to accept the site plan application as complete. Ms. Remillard seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. Quackenbush asked if Capone had plans to construct a building there in the future, and Stephen Kinney stated that it might be considered but is not on their radar at this time. Mr.

Mr. Quackenbush asked about the wetlands, and Mr. Grenier advised there will be substantial impact to the wetlands as part of the project and they are looking at mitigation. Ms. Laflamme advised that the wetlands on the site are not considered high value, and that the City currently holds a conservation easement at the base of Mt. Jasper in exchange for disturbing the wetlands on this site. They will work with DES to come up with a layout that will satisfy them. Ms. Laflamme advised that although the Planning Board rules over issues as the Conservation Commission, wetlands are something that they let the state take care of. The conservation easement is on file at the registry. Wetlands mitigation on-site is not preferred, especially in an industrial park.

Ms. Remillard asked what the surface will be after excavation and Mr. Grenier advised it will be gravel.

Ms. Laflamme advised that Capone already has storage on the property and it is neat and well kept, and the storage ponds are doing the work they are supposed to be doing.

Mr. McCue made a motion to recess the meeting for the public hearing. Mr. Noel seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Ms. Langlois opened the public hearing at 6:42 pm for the site plan review for Capone Iron, Tax Map 140, Lot 20.

There were no public comments.

Ms. Langlois closed the public hearing at 6:43 pm.

Ms. Remillard made a motion to re-enter the meeting. Mr. McCue seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. Laflamme shared concerns about run-off, and asked about the type of gravel they will use. Mr. Grenier advised it will be bank run gravel for the first layer, and crushed 1 ½ on top for a working surface. Part of the design will include ditches and a run-off pond to make sure the run-off does not impact abutting properties.

Mr. Whittet asked where the steel is purchased from, and Stephen Kinney advised it is purchased through a service center in Connecticut. The storage will be long-term storage, so they will not have trucks in and out constantly.

Ms. Laflamme advised that conditions for the site plan approval should include: local, state, or federal permits obtained for this project will be placed on file with the Planning Department, construction may start prior to NHDES approvals as long as they are not in areas that fall under NHDES's jurisdiction, and the approval of a driveway permit.

Mr. Noel asked if the storage will include extra big, heavy pieces of steel, and Mr. Kinney advised it will be regular raw materials.

Ms. Remillard made a motion to approve the site plan for Stephen Capone/Capone Iron for Tax Map 140 Lot 20 with the conditions as presented. Mr. Whittet seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Findings of fact for the site plan include:

1. Site is zoned appropriately for use.
2. Proposed project is the third expansion of the business since 2016.
3. There is enough available land to accommodate proposed use.
4. There have been no land use concerns raised with the current setup of the business at its current location.
5. There are no objections from abutters.
6. All of the requirements of the site plan checklist have been met.

Mr. Valliere made a motion to approve the findings of fact for the site plan as presented. Mr. Noel seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

a. Wellhead Protection Overlay Zone – Special Use Permit

Ms. Laflamme advised that the special use permit meets the requirements in the Zoning Ordinance chapter for the permit.

Ms. Remillard made a motion to approve the Special Use Permit for the Wellhead Protection Overlay Zone. Mr. McCue seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. McCue read the findings of fact:

1. Proposed use of material storage/manufacturing facility is an allowable use in the wellhead protection area.
2. Proposed stormwater infrastructure is also an allowable use for the wellhead protection area.
3. Property owner is currently in compliance with the earlier phases of this facility.
4. No structures are proposed for the property meaning there less impact on the wellhead protection area.
5. Applicant is using best management practices to avoid any potential impact to the wellhead protection area.

Ms. Remillard asked about the wellhead and flood zone and Ms. Laflamme advised that the wellhead is identified by DES and Berlin Water Works is an interested party. If there are any issues or concerns, they would raise them.

Mr. Noel advised that they do consider this area an aquifer, and Ms. Laflamme advised it is also the Brown Farm wellhead, which is a backup water source.

Mr. Whittet noted that steel is a stable material.

Mr. Noel made a motion to approve the findings of fact as presented for the Special Use Permit for the Wellhead Protection Overlay Zone. Mr. Bachner seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

b. Special Flood Hazard Overlay Zone – Special Use Permit

Ms. Laflamme noted that the site is Zone A in which you can build, and the storage of materials is considered development. This is an allowed use if acknowledged by the building inspector.

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the Special Use Permit for the Special Flood Hazard Overlay Zone. Mr. Bachner seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. McCue read the findings of fact:

1. Flood Zone for this property is Zone A.
2. The project involves no structural construction.
3. The project does involve “development” which includes storage of materials according the SUP section of the Zoning Ordinance.
4. Applicants is working with NHDES to best determine the final footprint of project siting.

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the findings of fact as presented for the Special Use Permit for the Flood Hazard Overlay Zone. Mr. Noel seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. McCue mentioned the checklist used in addition to the application, and Ms. Laflamme advised this is for the applicants to use to understand what the Board is looking for.

Housing Opportunity Grant – NH Housing - update

Ms. Laflamme advised the Board that the planner they were hoping could assist with the grant has found another job, however the Barrett Planning Group is working with Plymouth, and their needs are similar. The Barrett Group would be available if they are selected for the grant. The grant has been submitted and they are hoping to hear back soon. The grant would include \$131,000 toward the audit of documents and updating documents, along with \$10,000 for each phase for community engagement, and an administrative allowance of \$9,000. There is no match required.

Public Comments

None

Member Comments

Mr. McCue advised that he attended the Office of Planning and Development Planning and Zoning Conference and found it informative. The training is available online. Mr. McCue stated that they used the term “attainable housing”, which fits with what they are trying to do with manufactured housing, and noted that housing is a statewide issue.

Mr. Whittet noted that there seems to be a link between financial inequality and housing issues. Mr. Whittet stated that Airbnb’s bring people to the area. Mr. Whittet stated that the hope is that people coming to the area have jobs to be able to afford housing.

Mr. McCue noted that short-term rentals do provide an opportunity for revenue, but seem to be driving up the prices of real estate. It was also noted that large companies have begun the business of buying up homes to use as rentals, which is inflating the market and affects attainable housing and assessed valuation.

Mr. Quackenbush noted that this is a national problem, as we are not adding housing as fast as the population is growing. Mr. Quackenbush stated that he is not worried about Airbnb here, as there is not enough labor available locally to clean them for companies.

Project Updates

Mr. Quackenbush noted again that he would like the City to take a lead in planning a 200th anniversary celebration. Ms. Laflamme advised that she would mention it to Walter Nadeau at the Berlin and Coos County Historical Society.

Adjournment

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

The Planning Board meeting ended at 7:19 pm.

May 2, 2023

Master Plan Implementation Committee

Ms. Langlois called the Master Plan Implementation meeting to order at 7:20pm.

Public Comments

None

Approval of February 2023 Minutes

Ms. Remillard made a motion to approve the Master Plan Committee Conversation minutes of February 2023.. Mr. Whittet seconded it. All in favor, motion carried.

Review of Implementation Plan Priorities Strategy 3 – Discussion

Ms. Laflamme quickly reviewed Theme 3, Revitalize the Downtown and the Adjacent Neighborhoods. There are 22 strategies in this theme.

The majority of Strategy 3A, Invest in the Downtown Infrastructure, will be covered by the RAISE Grant work.

Strategy 3B, Policy and Regulatory Changes will be covered by the HOP Grant, also known as the Housing and Opportunity Grant Program.

Strategy 3C, Creative Placemaking Initiatives, would probably make more sense to tackle after the RAISE work is completed.

Strategy 3D, Partnerships and Events are tasks which either can be done at any time or will need to wait until the RAISE work is completed. Strategy 3D.3, Meeting with Northern Forest Center is something that was discussed last year and at this time we do not have the capacity to do this. Strategy 3D.4, Expand the volunteer base to make downtown improvements is something the Main Street Program will be able to help with. The Main Street Program is currently undergoing some revitalizing.

The Federal Highways will be meeting with the City in a few weeks concerning the RAISE Grant, and will also be doing a site visit. Soon after that we should have a grant agreement. The HOP Grant agreement looks like it could be ready by June.

Ms. Laflamme is opening up the meeting to any member comments or concerns.

Mr. Quackenbush brought up a discussion around the steps of planning the design of downtown as part of the RAISE grant. Planning Board members want to be sure the Master Plan is considered throughout the process. There will be public meetings held for anyone to attend and comment.

Mr. Whittet brought up the Department of Energy and the plan Ms. Laflamme submitted to them.

Mr. Bachner asked about the process of the Implementation Committee going through all of the strategies. Ms. Laflamme stated that this is the third theme that's been reviewed out of six. Mr. Bachner displayed on the board a different method of documenting the implementation work by grouping Grants or Organizations. Mr. Bachner will be working on a flow chart outlining the process to help with everyone's understanding.

Mr. McCue shared information on the Downtown Day of Caring on May 19th for anyone who would like to help with the cleanup of downtown. This is also a good opportunity for members to meet some people from the Downtown program.

Mr. McCue also shared that next Thursday, May 11, there will be an informal gathering for the Main Street Program, local businesses and members of the arts community. It will be held at Tree City Arts on Pleasant Street. The main focus will be bringing people to Berlin.

Mr. Bachner asked about 3A.10 and how much of the Dead River reconstruction of the RAISE Grant will be attributed to the development of Moxie Alley. Ms. Laflamme explained that the City does not own Moxie Alley, it's owned by the abutting businesses. The City does not have the money set aside for that development which would have to include agreements between the businesses and the City. The City does have money set aside to replace the large culverts on each side and under Main Street. The redevelopment of Moxie Alley has been discussed since the 1970's.

There was a lot of discussion around the dilapidated vacant buildings on Main Street that are privately owned and how to deal with getting those buildings to be occupied and productive.

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

The Master Plan Implementation Committee 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.