

October 3, 2023
Planning Board

Present were: Regular Members: Chair Lori Langlois, Vice-Chair Tom McCue, Henry Noel, Dan Whittet and Larry Laflamme; **Ex-Officio Member:** Peter Morency and Lise Barrette; **Alternate Members:** Jeffrey Quackenbush and Micah Bachner

Excused was Regular Member: Karen Collins

Others Present: Pamela Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun

Chair Langlois called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Public Comments

None

Approval of September 6, 2023 Minutes

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 6, 2023 meeting as submitted. Mr. Laflamme seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried. Mr. Morency abstained.

Zoning Ordinance Discussion

Ms. Laflamme shared that the topic of Recreational Vehicles being parked in residential areas has been coming up more lately. She has been having discussions concerning this topic with Michel Salek, Building Inspector. Many people are now wanting to park RV's on their land or next to their homes for recreational purposes or as a living space, some for year-round. Our Ordinance does not currently allow this. We also have a conflict within our ordinances in that RV's are allowed within a flood zone as long as it's for fewer than 180 consecutive days because we had adopted the State's model Flood Plain Ordinance verbatim.

Mr. Quackenbush suggested that we set up some sort of permitting process with safety inspections in order to monitor them better.

Mr. Laflamme asked about whether electrical service is allowed to these recreational vehicles. Ms. Laflamme shared that she usually doesn't create an actual house number until there is a building permit for a new dwelling. Eversource will typically not put in a full electrical service until there is an official address.

Mr. Bachner asked if there was a specific zone that is being considered to allow RV's. Ms. Laflamme said it would be for the Rural Residential and Jericho Gateway zones.

Mr. Noel asked about the Flood Plain Ordinance. Ms. Laflamme says she will need to clarify whether we would be allowed to change any part of that adopted ordinance since it's verbatim of the State's FEMA Flood Plain ordinance.

Mr. McCue shared his concern of people who may be allowed to have an RV parked while they are building their house yet it becomes a very long project where they continue to live in their RV long term. Ms. Laflamme said this has not been an issue in our area.

Mr. Morency asked if this will also affect RV's parked on City streets. Ms. Laflamme said this could also tackle that issue.

Ms. Laflamme will take these comments back to her discussions with Mr. Salek.

Housing Opportunity Grant Follow-up

Ms. Laflamme said the dates for the Community Housing Issues forums will be on Friday, October 20th from 6pm to 8pm and on Saturday, October 21st from 9am to 11am. On Friday it will be held at the Berlin Middle High School cafeteria and there will be a free dinner offered. It will be set up as an open house style with stations that people can comment either verbally or in writing. On Saturday morning it will be in the City Hall auditorium and will be set up similarly with coffee and breakfast items. There will be copies of drafts available and a slide show. After a few months the Planning Board will be reviewing the drafts and making comments and changes. The work Barrett Planning group is doing is only going to affect the parts of the ordinance that specifically involves housing. Asked if this could possibly change our zones, Ms. Laflamme said it could.

Lot Merger, David McClay- Map 132 Lots 14 and 15 and Map 133 Lot 59

This property owner wants to build a house so he would like to merge these three lots. It has 20 feet of frontage on Kent Street but he wants to build his driveway off the dead end of Blais Street which is near his lot. There is an RSA which allows the erection of houses off a City street up to one block back from the City street with a special permit. The council will make the decision to sign a Private Road acknowledgement which will state that the property owner is responsible for things such as their own water and sewer connections, utility connections, plowing, and bringing their garbage up to the pavement. The suggestion was made to the property owner to use the Kent Street frontage which would be less costly but at this time he would like to use Blais Street.

Mr. McCue made a motion to accept the Lot Merger for Map 132 Lots 14 and 15 and Map 133 Lot 59. Mr. Whittet seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Board members discussed the following Findings of Fact:

- All three lots are under common ownership
- The property owner was made aware that end of Blais Street is not a City Street in front of his lot
- The lots are all adjacent

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

Ms. Laflamme said that this paper street is shown on the original zoning map but was never accepted as a street by the city. The City Council will need to approve special permission to use the Blais Street paper street.

Mr. Laflamme made a motion to recommend to the City Council to approve the submittal of a building permit on the newly merged property. Mr. Noel seconded it.

Mr. McCue asked if this will include the Road acknowledgement. Ms. Laflamme said that it will be included with this special permission.

Mr. Whittet asked if it's possible that they would want to build more than one house on this large lot. Ms. Laflamme said it could only be done if there was a subdivision done which would require a land survey.

As there was no further discussion. All were in favor, the motion carried.

Public Comments

None

Member Comments

Mr. Morency asked if the ordinance change that involved the allowing of manufactured homes has brought any new interest. Ms. Laflamme has had some discussion with different realtors and has recently received a serious request.

Project Updates

Ms. Laflamme shared that the Disc Golf Mr. Bachner has worked for has been completed and is being used. It is a City asset and she has received questions concerning liability. The City's insurer has said that it would be no different than somebody throwing a baseball that went into the street and hit a vehicle. It would be handled the same way. There will be introduction signage put up at the first hole soon.

The Riverwalk project is being closed out. There are a few memorial dedications to be made either this Fall or in the Spring. The replacement lights are on back order but will hopefully be installed soon.

The Request for Bids for the demolition of the seven buildings will be going out by the end of the week.

Ms. Laflamme explained that with the Brown School Housing project comes a special companion grant through Invest NH, called the Municipal Per Unit Grant. This will make the City eligible for \$10,000 per affordable housing unit. She is expecting funds for a total of \$150,000 for the City to spend on an agreed upon expense.

The NH Department of Environmental Services has approved the work scopes towards the study for the clean-up of the properties that was once owned by Paul Croteau. Next year we

will be able to apply for clean-up grants. Many people have inquired about purchasing that property.

Ms. Laflamme shared that for the first time she has been selected for a review/interview by the Government Accountability Office for the Mason Street Bridge project. Currently the City is in the process of working with HEB Engineers for the design.

Ms. Laflamme shared that the RAISE grant has required many different policies to be submitted such as climate, justice, racial and equity, labor and work. The one she has to write from scratch is a Racial and Equity Policy and she has been in contact with the NH Service for Justice and Equity for assistance. She has received \$2,000 in funds from the Tillotson Foundation to help with the task.

The NH State representatives will be coming either in November or December, as a courtesy, to share their Site Plan for their extended campground at Jericho Lake.

Next months meeting will be on Tuesday November 14th because of elections which will be held on the 7th.

Asked if there was any feedback with the Department of Transportation's 10-year plan, Ms. Laflamme said that the RAISE project will have to be incorporated with their plan. Right now, the project they have in there for Berlin is the reconstruction of Route 16 from Cleveland Bridge to Exchange Street.

Adjournment

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

The Planning Board meeting ended at 7:23 pm.