

December 5, 2023
Planning Board

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

Excused was Ex-Officio Member: Peter Morency; and **Alternate Member:** Cassandra Mason

Others Present: Pamela Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives; Burke York, York Land Services, LLC; and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Chair Langlois called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Ms. Langlois appointed Alternate Member Jeffrey Quackenbush as a voting member.

Public Comments

None

Approval of November 14, 2023 Minutes

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 14 2023 meeting as submitted. Mr. Whittet seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Boundary Line Adjustment – Steward & Lufkin – Tax Map 120 Lots 75, 78, and 79

Mr. McCue made a motion to accept the application as complete. Mr. Bachner seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. York reviewed the plan with the board members. These properties are located at the corner of Madison Avenue and River Street. D & L Lufkin Properties LLC owns Map 120 Lots 78 & 79 which are both apartment buildings. The Stewarts own Lot 75 which is a single-family home. Mr. York explained some of the history of these lots in which it was not an issue for neighbors to go over the property line. The new owners would like to get the lot lines adjusted now. The Stewart's lot has their fence, a pond, and walkway which is actually on D&L Lufkin's lot. The adjustment is being made so that the Stewart's fence and everything within it is now on their own lot.

Mr. Quackenbush asked about the two small lots labeled CD-1 and CD-2 on the Madison Street side abutting lots 78 and 79. Mr. York explained that it has to do with street dimensions and after some research, it was decided to note them on the plan and work later to have the City dispose of them to be part of lots 78 and 79 respectively.

Chair Langlois recessed the Board meeting to open the Public Hearing at 6:40pm. After no comments were heard, she closed the Public Hearing and resumed the Planning Board meeting.

Mr. Bachner made a motion to approve the Boundary Line Adjustment as proposed. Ms. Collins seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Board members discussed the following Findings of Fact:

- The minimum subdivision standards are met with this plan
- The zoning is appropriate for this zone
- Both owners are willing parties in this transaction
- It adjusts the property lines to reflect use on the ground by the respective owners
- The zoning in regards to the setbacks are appropriate for both properties

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

Housing Opportunity Grant Follow-up

Ms. Laflamme shared that the Barrett Planning Group will have three draft documents to share with the Planning Board members soon to give enough time for members to review before the January meeting. One of the major takeaways of the recent public events are the price of housing and the lack of the supply of housing. Another point that was brought up was the frustration with not following through with items from the Master Plan. She explained that although the process may feel slow moving, it's not a process that's meant to be fast. The Master Plan is referred to on a regular basis. Another piece that was taken from the events were a need for quality transitional senior housing. We have some already for disabled and subsidized, but we don't have any sort of Assisted Living Facility which is a need for our large senior population. Also mentioned was a need for tiny houses.

There was a lot of interest on banning short-term rentals which is not something that can be done in NH at this time. The board will need to start thinking about how to approach this topic and how to treat short term rentals by using either zoning or regulating. The percentage of short-term rentals in Berlin is still pretty small compared to some other communities. There was further discussion among the board members on discerning between a short-term vacation and long-term living rentals. Ms. Laflamme also explained that NH is not a Home Rule State which would mean the State makes the rules and it would apply to everyone. In NH, if a municipality wants to do something different the State has to give permission to do things differently. The State has not yet come up with an overall policy for all communities but there are documents from NHMA to help give some guidance to communities concerning short-term rentals. There was additional conversation around attached and detached accessory dwelling units. Asked if there was a way to keep track of how many short-term rentals in Berlin, Ms. Laflamme said we use the AirDNA website to keep track. Mr. McCue said that there was a legislative bill that was not passed which would allow the communities to regulate short-term rentals, but what did get passed was that communities can't zone them out.

Ms. Laflamme said Barrett Planning Group will be here at the next meeting of January 9th and will be reviewing the three draft documents with us.

Other

Ms. Laflamme shared a letter the Mayor had asked to be forwarded to the Planning Board.

Dear City Mayor,

I would like to give the City of Berlin Planning Board some economical development ideas for more business to come to the City of Berlin. I have a few creative planning ideas to help the city and I am suggesting these ideas. First of all, I really think that Berlin would improve more with the planning idea of a shopping mall on Route 110 by the beer brewery for tourist industry and the economy for the area and creating more jobs for the people of Berlin.

I also think some new chain restaurants like a Hennessey House or an Olive Garden would be nice and perhaps a new sea-food restaurant. Perhaps an amusement park would also be nice in the Milan vacant land town lines and also a YWCA pool and rec. center would be fun for the public. I would like to thank you kindly for reading this letter and seriously consider these ideas in planning board meetings in the near future. Would you kindly write back to me soon. Thank You.

Sincerely, Helene Cotnoir

Ms. Collins asked about the Boys and Girls Club opening something at the White Mountains Community College, Ms. Laflamme explained that it came about through a donation to them with a request to open a child care center at the college for ages zero to five.

There was discussion around YMCA and how someone who's passionate about opening one can contact YMCA and implement a group with residents or staff to get together and to plan this sort of project. This was done a few years back by some mothers in the area who got together and worked hard to get a Skate Park.

The board members discussed some things that could be included in a response to Ms. Cotnoir. It should be said that it's great for her to reach out, and nice to see that she is passionate about her City development. Specifics about how she can contact the YMCA can be included. It should be mentioned that future development on Route 110 is awaiting the extension of water and sewer, and any ideas which she may have in Milan should be shared with Milan.

Public Comments

None

Member Comments

Mr. Quackenbush shared that the Energy Collaborative also known as AVEC will be having a Community Energy Choice Aggregation Concept where they will have a small presentation for the public followed by a question and answer session. These will be held at the City Hall auditorium on January 10th and February 14th tentatively.

Mr. Quackenbush also shared that there is an RFP will be available for a Community Co-op property ownership in mobile home parks for solar projects on common land.

Ms. Langlois shared that the schedule of meetings for 2024 has been emailed to everyone.

Project Updates

None

Adjournment

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

The Planning Board meeting ended at 7:25 pm.