

February 21, 2017
Planning Board

Present were: Tom McCue, Lori Langlois, Martha Creegan, Greg Estrella, Richard Cassidy, Helene Rayborn, Lori Langlois, Ex-officio member Lucie Remillard, Naomi Levesque

Aline Boucher was excused for the evening

Others Present: Pamela Laflamme, Community Development Director; Michel Salek; Code Enforcement Officer; Jen Myers, Administrative Assistant

Public Comments – No public in attendance

Approval of January Minutes

Mr. Estrella moved with a second from Ms. Langlois to approve the January 2017 minutes. So moved, the motion carried.

Ms. Laflamme stated that the City will be meeting with the owners of the greenhouse project tomorrow. They will not make the March 7 meeting. We may need to move the March meeting to accommodate the 10 day notice requirement, however the owners may also opt to wait until April to present. There must be an agreement to buy or an option agreement in place with the City, who owns the proposed site, prior to presenting to the board.

There was thoughtful discussion of what topics and questions should be brought up at the meeting when the greenhouse project is presented.

City Owned Parcels Project

The Planning Board has been asked to review the City owned parcels that have been acquired over the years and it is time to do it again. City owned buildings will not be a part of this exercise. It may be time again to put some of these properties out to bid.

Some of the parcels that have continued to be retained may have very steep slopes requiring extensive site work, drainage issues, or may be under the minimum lot size standard of 50x100. There may also be unique lots which are worth hanging onto for the future such as a parcel on Jericho Road which was acquired through tax deed and is on the ATV route. Contiguous lots may also be merged if it would make sense to sell as one larger parcel.

Suggestions of what is surplus and should be offered for sale and what should be retained will be submitted to City Council. Ms. Laflamme gave descriptions of a few of the parcels and thoughts on selling or retaining them. She will sort the compiled list by map and lot,

for ease of location on a map, and make notations regarding each parcel, then send it out to the board. It is worth noting that some of these locations may need to be visited physically.

This will be on our March agenda, maybe April depending on greenhouse meeting. There is time to put this together.

Accessory Dwelling Unit discussion

June 1, 2017 a new law will go into effect for ADUs. The big zone this effects is Residential Single Family, where you can have only a residential single family home and its accessory uses. As the world and its demographics are changing there may be instances in which an ADU makes a lot of sense. The law recognizes the expense to convert the property and will not require it to be changed back to a previous use when the ADU is no longer needed. The municipality cannot demand that there be a familial relationship between occupants to allow the unit.

It was mentioned that instead of creating a new ordinance to address ADUs, all Residential Single Family zones could be changed to Two Family, which would automatically cover an ADU as a secondary residence. This would be the easier way to achieve it. Read through the attached handout, the City's current ordinance, and the sample ordinance that was given. The new ordinance or changes to the current one will need to be in place by June 1. Remember it will need to go to Council and there will also need to be a public hearing.

There was some discussion regarding the new law and the sample ordinance. Other potential uses that could be effected by this law like Air B & B, long term vs short term rentals, and tiny homes and potential issues and complaints that could be raised and have already come to the City were brought up.

Workforce housing was mentioned, however Berlin is well beyond what is needed and required per the New Hampshire Workforce Housing Law. There is plenty of excess housing, and a variety across the pricing spectrum. There is no worry about having enough supply or stock.

Project Updates

Greenhouse Project – Given at start of meeting.

Signage Work – The Committee has made great progress. They have been focusing on content-based signage and a community's control/lack of control of a message that comes out on a sign as well as the board's concern of size for off-premise signs. They will be re-writing the whole chapter on signage, including cleaning up the electronic sign ordinance and off-premise signs. Feather flags will be allowed, however location restraints will be addressed for visibility.

Currently the ordinance as written could be challenged in court. Slight wording changes will be made to remedy this. Language hasn't been drafted yet but will be soon.

Welcome Sign – A new location on Eversource's property has been designated for the sign. HEB Engineers will need to survey the location and approval by Eversource is needed. Once approved, all materials will be ordered and installation will move forward.

Board Memberships

Updated Board list was reviewed. All new members and newly appointed positions were approved. Mr. Estrella's term will be expiring in April, he will need to notify Ms. Laflamme if he desires to serve another term. She will send a letter to City Council on his behalf and it could be approved at their March meeting.

Other

Just a reminder that the March 7th meeting will more than likely be moved, unless the developers for the greenhouse project opts to wait until April.

Public Comments – there were no comments

Member Comments – Mr. Estrella commented on the electrical work on Route 16. Ms. Laflamme asked that members take notice of the newly installed LED light at the corner of Abenaki Lane and Main Street. Please give feedback and comments on what you think, especially in regards to brightness as this is the test phase to check it.

Bump outs. There will be a meeting tomorrow morning and the Mayor will be in attendance. They will be talking about recommendations for changes that should be made in the spring.

Planner Comments – there were no comments

There being no further business to come before the board, Mr. Cassidy made a motion to adjourn for the night, seconded by Ms. Langlois. All in favor the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:58 pm.

Jen Myers
Administrative Assistant