

July 10, 2018
Planning Board

Present were: Regular Members Tom McCue, Lori Langlois, Greg Estrella, Richard Cassidy, Helene Rayborn, Naomi Levesque, Ex-Officio Member Lucie Remillard, and Ex-Officio Member Bryan Chevarie

Regular Member Christina Lefebvre and Alternate Member Lane Strahan were excused

Others Present: Pamela Laflamme, Community Development Director; Michel Salek, Code Enforcement Officer

Public Comments

None

Approval of June Minutes

Mr. McCue noted that he used the terms public hearing and public meeting interchangeably on at least one occurrence during the prior meeting. He wanted to note that it was a public meeting. Additionally, he stated that he is quoted asking a question about water levels in the last paragraph of page three, "Mr. McCue asked what impact the dams have on water levels in the area." This quote should have been attributed to Dick Merrill. Ms. Levesque added that she is quoted as saying, "Ms. Levesque asked if incorporating the boat ramp that already exists at Horne field would be wise." This quote should have been attributed to Ms. Rayborn. Ms. Langlois made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Estrella seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Curb Cut Application – 36 High Street

Ms. Laflamme explained to the group that the Planning Board oversees curb cut applications. Typically, a taxpayer will get a permit from the Public Works Department but the Planning Board lays out the regulations and handles commercially-zoned requests and appeals of residentially-zoned cuts that the Public Works Department denies. The group has been handed a curb cut application for a commercially-zoned residential property (Business General) located at 36 High Street.

The lot is 60' x 70' and therefore undersized for a 24' cut. The Planning Board is allowed to waive or modify regulatory provisions with these applications on a case-by-case basis. Typically, a lot of this size is only allowed to have a 12' cut since the parcel has less than 100' of roadside frontage. Ms. Laflamme and Mr. Salek have reviewed the particulars of this scenario and feel that it would be appropriate for this parcel to be allowed to have a 24' cut. This is a two-unit residential building and there is not enough depth to park two vehicles front-to-back between the primary structure and the sidewalk. Ms. Remillard stated that it makes more sense to have enough room to park two vehicles side-by-side,

especially for a two-unit parcel. Mr. Cassidy asked if this cut would encroach on his easterly neighbor. Ms. Laflamme explained that there is no setback requirement for curb cuts, much like fences. The property line is the boundary. Mr. Estrella inquired about the slope of the driveway. A brief discussion of catch basins and water and, in turn, snow disposal ensued.

Ms. Remillard made a motion to grant the 24' curb cut application. Ms. Rayborn seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Project Updates

Riverwalk – Ms. Laflamme explained that the online survey for the project has generated approximately 300 responses to date. There has been excellent feedback from members of the community. There was also a meeting regarding the Riverwalk involving the Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Park, the Farmer's Market, Brown School, Brookfield, and the Historical Society. This meeting was constructive and will help drive the project, along with community feedback, towards the final design.

Skate Park – The City has authorized Spohn Ranch to begin their construction drawings. One of their construction crews has recently begun working on another project this week that is expected to take six weeks to complete. The goal is for the Berlin project to be ready to begin construction at that time.

Welcome Sign – The pertinent building and electric permits have been issued by Mr. Salek. Ms. Remillard asked when the project is anticipated to be completed. Ms. Laflamme explained that there will be some lead time once they order the granite piece. The project is expected to be completed in approximately four to six weeks. Mr. Estrella asked if the exact location has been picked and if the transfer of the Smith Hydro parcel will affect this project. Ms. Laflamme stated that the transfer has not yet occurred, and once it does there should not be a problem with the sign as Hull Street Energy (purchasers) are aware of the agreement for the sign.

Farmers Market – The first market of 2018 opened just hours before this Planning Board meeting began. Talk of types of vendors and potential future plans of the market were briefly discussed.

Snowmelt – A consultant has been hired to conduct the feasibility study for the downtown snowmelt project.

Hutchins Street sidewalk – The City is applying for Transportation Alternative Program grant that would fund the continuance of the sidewalk from Napert Village to the Hutchins Street Park. HEB Engineers will furnish the City with two options in regards to this project. First, they will figure the cost involved with constructing the same type of sidewalk that

was recently installed on Hutchins Street with bricks and features that could incorporate the addition of electricity for lights in coming years. The company will also present the projected cost of constructing a less expensive sidewalk that will have granite edging but no bricks or extra features. As the City has to pay 20% of the cost with this type of grant, it will be wise to give City Council more than one option to choose from.

North Country Growers – July 31 is the deadline for the purchase and sale agreement, however, an extension may be filed.

Other

There was no other business.

Public Comments

There were no public comments at this time.

Member Comments

The group discussed what kind of construction activity is being performed near the Twelfth Street Bridge. Ms. Laflamme stated that drainage issues are being addressed.

Mr. McCue raised the topic of Airbnb and short-term rentals. The issue has recently popped up in the news in a couple forums. The first being a court appeal for a zoning denial in Portsmouth and the other was in last month's North Country Council meeting. He finds it interesting that towns that are very close geographically seem to have very different views regarding these short-term rentals. The group discussed challenges and opportunities that can arise within a community with this type of activity.

Planner Comments

None

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Langlois made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Remillard. All in favor, the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:30 pm.

The next Planning Board meeting will be on August 7th, 2018.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bryan Chevarie