

Planning Board Minutes

October 1, 2019

Present were: Chair Tom McCue, Lori Langlois, Greg Estrella, Richard Cassidy, Helene Rayborn, Naomi Levesque, Tony Valliere, Suzanne Wasileski and Ex-Officio Member Lucie Remillard

Excused: Christina Lefebvre, Lane Strahan, Bryan Chevarie, and Aline Boucher

Others Present: Pamela Laflamme, Community Development Director; Michel Salek, Code Enforcement Officer; Jay Poulin, HEB Engineers; Mayor Paul Grenier; Devon York, Code Clerk; Dammon Frecker, CS Operations, Inc./Burgess BioPower; David Brooks, Jericho Mountain Wind Company; Jim Wheeler, City Manager; Roland Theberge, City Councilor; Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Sun

Public Comments

None

Approval of September Minutes

Chair McCue opened the meeting. Revision to last meeting minutes, Lucie Remillard was listed as present but didn't actually attend the meeting. . Mr. Estrella moved with a second by Ms. Langlois to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2019 meeting as written. So moved, motion carried.

Site Plan Review – Conceptual Consultation

Burgess – BioPower/CS Operations Inc., - Greenhouse Project, Map 129 Lot 54.01

Mr. Poulin and Mr. Frecker present conceptual review of project for Board review, questions, and feedback. Mr. Frecker reported that the greenhouse project has been in the works for over a year, and is still in process as they work with a greenhouse developer. Mr. Poulin showed a map of the 4 acre site off Hutchins Street. New Greenhouse would be on site of current warehouse and cement block building. New office and maintenance building would be relocated to closer to the current location of the office trailer space. Purpose of the greenhouse is to grow baby leaf greens (lettuce, kale, spinach, arugula). Greenhouse will have full block shades to limit light emissions, and will run day shift only. Fencing has been identified as needed but not for full property. The project will employ 20-30 employees. Traffic impact would be employees at shift start and end, and about 10 trucks per day, using existing truck and scales entrance off of Hutchins Street. Greenhouse will need municipal water and sewer and would use existing storm water system. They do not anticipate tapping into street drains or needing to in future. At this time they are hoping to come back before end of year with update and want to be permitted and running by mid-2020.

Chair McCue asked how the trucking would work with the Biomass trucking. Mr. Poulin reported that they would work together. Biomass trucks tend to come in more during the morning hours and there will be a need to have the ability to bypass each other. Chair McCue asked if it would require a new curb cut, and Mr. Poulin replied that it would. A stop light would not be required, and they do not want to subdivide.

Mr. Estrella asked about the steam system requirements, and Mr. Frecker reported that there is one loop for steam making power and another cooling loop, processing 50,000 gallons per hour at 90 degrees. Demand of steam system would be retrofitted to include capacity for the heated streets infrastructure project.

Asked about demolition, Mr. Poulin reported that they would demo the warehouse and cement block building, not the scale building. New buildings will not encroach upon current buildings or space needs.

Asked about environmental issues, Mr. Poulin reported that soil samples are being processed now. Levels will be light industrial, and they are mindful of soil management. The site is not close to and will not impact that area on Hutchins Street.

Asked about noise levels, Mr. Frecker reported that there would be one fan, located on side away from other properties. Greenhouse will not generate much movement or activity outside.

Asked about odors, Mr. Frecker reported that they would be using no pesticides, all products used are within FDA limits. He visited a similar operation in Florida that is up and running and has no smells or loud noises.

Mr. Estrella asked about runoff from processes. Mr. Frecker reported that the only discharge from Greenhouse would be water runoff from hydroponics. Levels of nutrients in runoff water are low, approximately 100 ppm. Explained hydroponic growing process.

Mr. Salek asked if they had plans for a backup power generator. Mr. Frecker reported that they would initially be powered by Eversource with a generator for backup. Mr. Salek asked if the Greenhouse was a kit or a build, and if it would be compliant to local Code. Mr. Frecker reported that the Greenhouse would come from the Netherlands as a kit, which is UL code compliant to commercial code. Structure is made mostly of steel and glass.

Mr. Estrella asked why they would bring in power if the Biomass plant generates electricity. Mr. Frecker replied that they would rely on grid power like anyone else, but are looking into bringing power directly from the plant. Asked if solar power was an option, Mr. Frecker reported that they did not want to create shade. Mr. Frecker stated that Berlin has been good to Burgess, and they want to continue to be good neighbors.

Site Plan – Conceptual Consultation**Jericho Mountain Wind Company – Battery Storage Project – Tax Map 410 Lot 5**

Mr. Brooks arrived at 7:20 to present concepts for three projects, each with a separate developer, which he stated would include a lot of shared elements and costs.

Battery Storage Project would store power when turbines are not turning. Two batteries the size of tractor trailers would be placed where lines from 5 turbines come down Jericho Mountain. Metering would be done by Brooks. LS Power owns the site now. Mr. Brooks said there would be a benefit to city. This project would allow them to make energy when it's cheap and sell when it is expensive.

Asked if he had plans or drawing, Mr. Brooks indicated that he is working with engineers to decide best scenarios. Mr. Brooks was advised by the Chair that he would need to work with Eversource and LS Power to determine if scenarios are possible and return to planning board with reviewable information before a site plan review can be considered.

Site Plan Review – Conceptual Consultation**Jericho Mountain Wind Company – Small Wind Turbine & Solar Field Project – Tax Map 410 Lot 5**

Mr. Brooks stated that the turbine and solar field projects do not currently have plans, but would be solely owned and financed by their family. Mr. Brooks was advised that it was premature to come to planning board without a plan. He stated that he was looking for some guidance on how to proceed. Described in detail his ideas for turbine and solar field projects, as well as tourist attraction to transport guests up the mountain in “pods”, which he described as TransitX system. Needs 75,000 riders annually to break even.

Mr. Brooks stated that he would return with plans and drawings, and possibly a movie presentation about the “pods”. Mr. Brooks was asked about the scope of projects involving more than his property, and he said he was still in the initial stages and interested in feedback. Mr. Brooks provided his contact information and was advised that conversations with two or more board members outside of a scheduled meeting would be considered a meeting and subject to Board rules.

Site Plan Review Conceptual Consultation**Jericho Mountain Wind Company – Transit X Project – Tax Map 410 Lot 5**

Mr. Brooks included this project in his presentation of the turbine and solar field projects. He described his idea for a solar powered transport system which would bring riders to the top of the mountain in pods. Asked if it would be aerial like a ski lift, Mr. Brooks described it as a monorail. Transport trail would not interfere with snowmobile trails. Mr. Brooks was advised again that the Board could not review or consider his plan until he provided more information.

Project Updates

Community Profile – UNH Co-op Extension will host a Community Profile Planning Workshop Friday, October 4 and 5, 2019 at Berlin High School. Friday's session will take place from 5:00-8:30, beginning with a dinner at 5:00. Activities will resume Saturday morning at 8:30 and the event will conclude at noon.

Ms. Laflamme thanked volunteers and asked if anyone else wants to volunteer.

Master Plan – Ms. Laflamme shared with the board that she wrote and received a grant for \$20,000.00 to revise the City's Master Plan in 2020 from the Neil & Louise Tillotson Fund. Requests for proposals for the work will go out in late October or early November.

Downtown Zoning - Ms. Laflamme reviewed that the City received a request from a property owner in Berlin regarding changing the zoning regulations. It involves the requirement of keeping a percentage of the first floor of a building for commercial use in the downtown zone instead of allowing it to be turned into residential units. Ms. Laflamme has solicited feedback from the consultants doing the current Economic Development Strategy as downtown is a key cornerstone of the work being proposed for revitalization and while they do not think this is a good idea on its own, they do think that perhaps resizing downtown and redefining the boundaries of downtown would be a good idea. A smaller footprint would make sense. The majority of the BIDPA board did not support the idea of changing the ordinance while we are looking at making improvements and changes to downtown but at least two members suggested reviewing the current footprint of downtown. We will look at that at meeting next month.

Economic Development Strategy & Marketing work – Camoin Associates will be at the October 14th Council meeting to speak jointly to Council and BIDPA about their final recommendations.

UNH Cooperative Extension will be back in Berlin on Wednesday October 23rd to review a preliminary action plan from the outcomes of the Community Profile work this coming weekend. Anyone is welcome to attend that meeting here at City Hall, 5pm.

Reminder: Tuesday Nov 5th, meeting will be moved to Wednesday the 6th.

Public Comments

none.

Member Comments

Ms. Wasileski expressed concern about newly opening restaurants, and whether or not they needed site plans if the property was previously a restaurant. Would be a case by case situation.

Ms. Remillard and Mr. Estrella discussed the lettering on the Berlin sign as you enter downtown, and the possible need for lighting to be more visible.

Ms. Levesque asked why Mr. Brooks thought he needed a permit to store an unused turbine on his property. Noted that the City stored them at the Bass plant before construction.

Planner Comment

The November meeting will be held on Wednesday November 6th to allow for everyone to have time to vote in the municipal elections on Tuesday November 5th.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. McCue made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Langlois. All in favor, the motion carried. The meeting ended at 8:16 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Devon York