

February 4, 2020 Planning Board

Present were: Regular Members Tom McCue, Lori Langlois, Helene Rayborn, Naomi Levesque, Christina Lefebvre, Richard Cassidy, Greg Estrella, and; Ex-Officio Member Lucie Remillard; and Alternate Members Lane Strahan, Susanne Wasileski, and Anthony Valliere .

Excused were: Ex-Officio Member Bryan Chevarie was excused.

Others Present: Pamela Laflamme, Community Development Director; Michel Salek, Code Enforcement Officer; Jim Wheeler, City Manager; Paul Grenier, Mayor; Fred Dambrie of Wildcat LLC; Sonny Couture of Couture Construction; Architect, Michael Couture; Mr. and Mrs. Ron Demers; Captain Peter Donovan; Dave and Laurie Redston of Timberland Adventures Inc; Bob Chapman; Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Sun; Burke York, York Land Services; and Lise Barrette.

Public Comments

None

Approval of January 2020 Minutes

Ms. Remillard made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2020 meeting. Ms. Rayborn seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Presentation- Brown School Housing project – Wildcat LLC; Fred Dambrie & Sonny and Michael Couture

Mr. Couture reviewed the plans and pointed out that this is a higher end apartment complex and will include 30 parking spaces, possibly a coffee shop and the existing gym could be an event center which the local college has said they would be interested in renting. There will be a crosswalk leading to the future Riverwalk. The 18 apartments available will consist of six being micro, or studio, apartments, six one-bedroom apartments, and six two-bedroom apartments. One unit will be handicapped accessible which is in the newer part of the building, located near the existing gym and will be built to handicap requirements. There will also be a laundry area, but the one and two bedroom units will have individual washer and dryer hookups. The bathrooms on the first floor will be kept and updated for the multifunction center.

Much of the building structure will be kept the way it is except for issues like closing stairs properly. The integrity of the building is solid. The apartments are a generous size. All new windows will be put in and the sprinkler and fire alarm systems will be put up to code. There will be lots greenspace with walkways and places for people to hang out.

Mr. Cassidy asked if the event room will be used during the day for things like a community lunch. Mr. Dambrie said it will be used for basketball and possibly other sports. That area has a stage and he was hoping a local theater might be interested in using it. There may be events like weddings and he plans on having an Event Manager. He says it's not a bad idea to have community lunch and it's a possibility. Mr. Cassidy also asked about the windows being

installed and whether they will open for air or will there be A/C. AT this time they plan on having A/C for all units.

Ms. Lefebvre asked if the coffee shop will be open to the public. If so, the parking seems far away. Mr. Dambrie said it will be street parking for customers coming into the coffee shop. Ms. Lefebvre also questioned as to whether the heating system will remain one system for all units or will there be different zones set up? It was explained that there will be several zones set up. Ms. Lefebvre asked about how many units there will be in the 'older' building. There will two in the basement and three more on the two levels above that. Asked if there will be storage units for tenants to store items like bikes, Mr. Dambrie explained there were some other rooms in the basement but it has not been determined yet. Ms. Lefebvre was interested if Mr. Dambrie was going to use some units as Airbnb. He is thinking of testing the use of the micro-apartments as Airbnb to see if there is a demand.

Ms. Strahan asked about the playground that is currently there and whether it will stay. It will be gone, they will have parking spots and some nice landscaping with green space. Asked if it will be pet friendly, Mr. Dambrie says all his current rentals are although it does depend on the individual and the pet. Ms. Strahan asked if it could possibly have a dog park in the future expressing how our community needs one. Mr. Dambrie said it would be an idea to consider.

Mr. Valliere asked Mr. Dambrie if the coffee shop will be run by him or rented out. It will be rented out. He was also thinking about approaching the local college to set up some sort of business to be part of their program where there can be internships.

Ms. Levesque asked about the parking lot and Mr. Couture explained it in further detail on the drawings. There was also some discussion about lighting.

Ms. Wasileski asked about the fencing and whether it will stay as is? It will be left as is except for the cuts made for the driveway entry.

Ms. Remillard asked if they will be subsidized apartments and whether there is a requirement to have some of them subsidized. Mr. Dambrie said although it's not a requirement he is considering it, as he currently has 18% of his units he has in the City are subsidized. Asked about whether there will be any decks, Mr. Dambrie said there may some in the 'older' building but it all depends on costs and interference with windows.

Ms. Rayborn asked whether there is enough room for all the parking portrayed on the drawing. She was assured that there is enough for all units. Ms. Rayborn owns a property next to this building and is wondering how it will affect property assessments. They seem to think if there was an effect it would be positive.

Ms. Langlois was concerned about the parking lot and there not being much space for pushing snow, and where would they put the snow. Mr. Dambrie explained that Nathan Styles (Wintergreen Landscaping) is the one who will be handling snow removal.

Mr. McCue expressed his concern for them to respect and show an understanding of the neighborhood. Please keep it mind that building a housing development in that area is something new. Mr. Dambrie said the event center will only have events that are well received by the tenants and will be respectable.

Mr. Estrella asked if the parking lot spaces will be dedicated to only tenants. It looks like you won't have enough for all the residents. He was assured that all residents will have a parking space. Mr. Estrella wondered what the start and end times would be for any activities in the activity center. Mr. Dambrie explained that there won't be any kind of late night, loud concerts and there will also be a restriction on the occupant load for that room.

Ms. Demers was part of the selection committee and also lives on Norway Street. She talked about how they were originally concerned about what was going to be there. They really like the idea of having upscale apartments. They are concerned about parking that may happen on Norway Street and whether vehicles will be there be there long term. Mr. Dambrie explained they are required to have a certain amount but they can't designate street parking to their use. Mr. Demers suggested that the parking spaces on Main Street between the bump outs would be an ideal spot for visitor parking and it was agreed that this would be a good place if they can get it designated as such. Mr. McCue said that in addition to the Planning Board review, there is a Traffic & Safety Committee which can deal with any parking issues. Ms. Demers also wanted to say her neighbors were all for this project, they like the idea of an upscale apartment complex.

Captain Donovan from the Berlin Fire Dept. asked if the current state code, 2015 edition was being used and was assured it was.

Mayor Grenier expressed full faith in the city staff and what they bring, which is usually a good finished project. At this time there is no property transfer. Mr. Couture said that they are here this evening to get ideas as to whether the project looks good and see if they can put it together.

Mr. Wheeler expressed that it looked it will be a nice project and likes that it's tied in to the Riverwalk. He like the idea of a high end residential complex.

Ms. Levesque asked about the parking area across Main Street that was used as teacher parking and whether that can be utilized for visitor or event parking. Mr. Couture said that was considered also. Ms. Laflamme said that the Traffic & Safety Committee can also take this under consideration

Ms. Rayborn asked about the entry to the parking lot being on Norway and to how much traffic that may cause. Mr. Dambrie pointed out that there is a requested curb cut on Main Street which will help a lot to eliminate traffic from Norway. Mr. Cassidy asked if it's going to be one way for example the cars would come in on Main and exit on Norway. At this time they have planned on it being two way traffic.

Captain Donovan pointed out that he wants to be sure there is room for the ladder truck to access the windows. He was assured there will be.

Ms. Remillard expressed that currently there is hardly any parking available for this site. To have 30 spaces for parking on this site is more than there ever has been when the school was there.

Mr. Couture also informed the group that they will have an enclosed dumpster location off the sides of the building. Mr. Dambrie said there is space for two dumpsters.

Ms. Tetreault of the Berlin Sun asked about the time table on getting the project done. It will take about two months to get all the drawings done. They are using this meeting to see if the project is viable based on what it will cost. If it is, then they will go to the city to see about purchasing the property. Ms. Tetreault wanted to verify what will be on the main level. There will be a coffee shop, laundry room, and the public bathrooms. Mr. Dambrie expressed that he would love to see a local theater group use the stage. The coffee shop will have eight to ten seats and will be open to the public.

Mr. McCue stated that #4 and #5 on the agenda will be swapped as requested.

Site Plan Review – Timberland Adventures Inc, Tax Map 407 Lots 15 and 15.2

Burke York, of York Land Services, went over the site plans for the ten cabin units. The land is located on the corner of Route 110 and Head Pond Road. Head Pond Road is a private road and Timberland Adventures owns most of it inside their property boundary and at the entrance to their land to the end of their property. Sheets showing existing conditions, 2' contours, wetlands and property lines involved were explained. There is an entrance on the east from Head Pond Road. In the middle is an oval area with 10 cabins surrounding a middle grass area which will be set up like a fire pit. Each cabin will have room for an extended cab pickup and trailer. They will have their own water, heat and electricity or propane. There will be a community septic system installed. Cabins will be rented for no more than nine months a year per state guidelines. They plan to capitalize on ATV tourism and create a place for ATV's to stay in the area with direct trail access. Cabin area is roughly one and a half acres.

Mr. McCue asked about the ownership of Head Pond Road. Mr. York said it was owned by Timberland Adventures and it was part of their property. These are state trails and there is a ROW which also goes through Mr. Chapmans land. The city or state has no maintenance responsibility for the road. There are old ROW easements and reciprocal rights have been held.

Mr. Estrella asked about the time schedule for this project. They plan on building in the spring and would like to be up and running by this summer. The first step is with the Planning Board tonight, the plans still need some small tweaking but it's close to final. After tonight, they will be looking at storm water designs to be engineered. They will need NHDES subdivision approval because it's a campground. The permitting process is in the works. They wanted to see how tonight would go and then they would move forward with NHDES approvals, stormwater and septic approvals from the State as well as the City Planning Board approvals.

Mr. Cassidy asked about the size of the trailers that will be coming in? He's concerned about the dirt road culverts and whether there will be enough room on the road. They expect to have standard pickups with trailers in the back to be parked on the lots. Ms. Laflamme restated that it's a private road and it wouldn't be the City's concern as the road will be the responsibility of

those who have ownership and or other legal rights to it. There was discussion around the fact that logging trucks and fire trucks have been down that road and there shouldn't be any problems. Mr. Cassidy asked if there is a future concept to expand if this takes off. They feel that if it works well, then they would like to do a Phase 2 and get the permits needed at that time.

Mr. York also said there will be a seasonal employee there by the entrance, there will be somebody there at all times.

Ms. Lefebvre asked how many does each cabin sleep. It will sleep two to four people. For the cabins to be considered seasonal it has to be under 400sf. Ms. Lefebvre expressed her concerns on communications, phone lines, and calling for emergency services. The seasonal employee will have cellular service available in that area. Ms. Levesque asked if it's only going to consist of gravel drive, or if there were any pavement areas. Mr. York said it will be all gravel except for the grass area in the middle.

Captain Donovan expressed his concern about the gravel driveway being built to be suitable for fire trucks and he was assured it will be. Captain Donovan also asked if a fire truck will have access to each cabin in the middle circular area. There was also discussion about having a 60' area at the Route 110 end where a fire truck can pull up, back in, and pull back out. A point was made that there won't be any barriers around the grass area, so it can be accessed by vehicles. Fire truck access will be discussed more in the future.

Ms. Remillard asked about electricity to the site. There will be, they are working with Eversource for a proposed pole. Afterwards, then can install whatever they need for lighting.

Ms. Rayborn asked about signage. Anything on Route 110 outside of the urban compact needs approval from DOT. There will also be something on Head Pond Road to mark the entrance.

Ms. Langlois asked if each unit will have a self-contained shower and bathroom. She was assured there would be. There will also be a picnic table and fire pit for each site. Fire wood will probably be sold on the site. There will be lighting for each of the cabin's surrounding area and entrance for safety.

Mr. Cassidy asked if they have considered solar lighting. Mr. Redston said that at their Shelburne site they have self-contained solar units in areas and this will probably also be used here. They haven't discussed backup power source yet, they possibly will get a generator.

Mr. McCue wanted to know if campers with motor homes will be allowed now or in the future. He was assured that it will be strictly cabins to rent. There was some discussion about a well, Alteration of Terrain, and other DES permits for campgrounds in NH.

Ms. Laflamme spoke for one of the abutters who owns a house nearby. They were initially nervous about having campers around, whether they will have buffers between cabins and there house and whether the campers will have rules to follow. The closet cabins will be approximately 500' away from their house. There was some discussion around expansion and keeping woods as a buffer between the house and cabins. Quiet hours at the Shelburne site start at 10pm, but with this site having access to trails they might push the time later if they

have to in order to be in line with Berlin's curfew. Ms. Laflamme wanted to clarify her concerns about lighting to not meaning Head Pond Road itself but the entry driveway for safety. Having a light on Head Pond Road would be nice but not necessary. Mr. Redston said he'd look into having a lighted sign on Head Pond Road. Ms. Laflamme also noted that the notes on the cover page of the plans may need to be changed slightly regarding the private road and its usage and responsibilities

Mr. Cassidy commented that the sign on Route 110 should probably show vacancy. Some discussion about this need followed, but will have to be permitted by the State.

Ms. Laflamme wanted to express how permitting campgrounds with NHDES is more difficult. One campground has already gone through the process and has had a lot of pushback. The only hesitation Ms. Laflamme has is that it's done consistently. The Planning Boards approval is conditional on the State's approval. Tonight's site plan review is preliminary and it's not up for approval at this time.

Ms. Langlois made a motion to accept the application as complete as submitted. Ms. Rayborn seconded the motion. All were in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. McCue opened the public hearing.

Mr. Chapman spoke about his land that sits around this project area and along Head Pond Road. He is one hundred percent for this project, yet he shared his concerns for this being part of the ATV world which is different than the RV world. At this time a lot of the ATV traffic does not take the corner off Head Pond road onto the Small Pond Holding's property, they go straight to Route 110 and they are not supposed to. Signs have been put up but then torn down. Mr. Redston replied that they will have trail maps to hand out at the site. They can also install a sign at the corner which states that for the Yamaha Connector Trail turn right, and the straightway is for cabin guests only. Mr. Chapman also expressed his concern about the ATV's tearing up the part of the road that will go directly to the cabin site.

Ms. Tetreault asked what the time frame for the season will look like. It will be from May to October.

Mr. McCue closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Salek said he'd like to see the plans include the material specs and cross sections for driveway areas, and utilities. It was noted by Mr. York.

Ms. Laflamme stated that this was the official public notice and that the Planning Board will continue this meeting on Tuesday March 3, 2020. There will be no mailed public notices, this is the official notice. If the applicants need more time, please let her know before the next meeting.

Lot Merger – Tax Map 407 Lots 15 and 15.2

Ms. Remillard made a motion to approve the merging of Map 407 Lots 15 and 15.2, it was seconded by Ms. Lefebvre. All in favor, the motion carried.

Project Updates

Ms. Laflamme informed the board that there have been talks with AT&T to install a cell tower on Cates Hill. They will be at the meeting next month. First, they need to get a special exception from the ZBA because of the fence being over eight feet tall. They will also need a variance.

Burgess Biopower has had trouble accessing a manufacturer for the greenhouse. There haven't been any available as they are all in Europe or overseas. They are currently in negotiations with one, and they hope to be at April's meeting.

Aline Boucher was acknowledged for her service of being on the Planning Board for 15 years. She will also be acknowledged by the City Council.

The city has met with HEB this week for the Riverwalk. HEB submitted the NEPA permit, and they are ready for the final design. Now it's just a matter for DOT to come back and say we can submit the final design. We are hoping to get the go ahead for building the Riverwalk this summer as the Northern Borders funds need to be spent soon.

The US Census representatives met with Ms. Laflamme and they are struggling on how to get people to respond to the census. They will be meeting with her again next week. Ms. Laflamme expressed the importance for everyone to ask friends and family if they responded to the census. People can go online, call, answer in paper form, or wait and someone will come to your house. They don't ask for social security numbers or for income. It's fast and information is not shared with any other federal or state agency. This is important for funding for the city, counts of vaccines for CCFHS, and for education funding. Some of the questions they do ask is how many people are in the home, their name, ethnicity and age.

The Office of Strategic Initiative will be meeting on Saturday, May 30th. It will be at the Grappone Center in Concord.

The North Country Growers have until the end of this month to buy the land for their greenhouses.

Ms. Laflamme asked Mr. Estrella if he wanted to move from a regular member to become an alternate member because he is finishing a full third term. Mr. Estrella said that this will be the last meeting he will be attending for the Planning Board. Congratulations and acknowledgement for his service was given.

Other

None

Public Comments

None

Member Comments

Ms. Lefebvre said she wanted to give her input on the armory since she was not able to make it to the last meeting. She says she has heard that some people are not happy about hearing the

Police Department would possibly move there. She has worked at the Police Department in the past and feels that building is in horrible condition and it's a horrible place to work in. She thinks moving it to the armory would be a great thing.

Ms. Rayborn asked what the purchase price was for the Brown School. That is still in negotiations and hasn't been determined yet.

Planner Comments

None

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the board, Ms. Remillard made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Langlois. All in favor, the motion carried. The meeting ended at 8:20pm.

The next Planning Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 3, 2019.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lise Barrette