

PLANNING BOARD

DATE: August 13, 2020

TIME: 6:00 P.M.

PLACE: Zoom Virtual Meeting

FOR: Regular Meeting

PRESENT: Brandee Nelson, Chair; Malcolm Fick; Jonathan Hankin; Jeremy Higa; Pedro Pachano
Chris Rembold, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Planning & Community Development

Ms. Nelson called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M. after reading the opening statement regarding the virtual meeting. The meeting was recorded. Ms. Nelson asked for a roll call of those members present. Roll call: Mr. Hankin, present; Mr. Pachano, present; Mr. Fick, present; Mr. Higa, present; Ms. Nelson, present

Present in the audience at the start of the meeting; Holly Hamer, Matthew Puntin; James Sorrentino; Dan McManmon; Brian Bordanaro; Melissa Orazio; Michelle Loubert; Trevor Forbes

FORM A'S:

There were no Form A's presented

MINUTES: JULY 23, 2020

Mr. Hankin made a motion to approve the minutes of July 23, 2020 as amended, Mr. Fick seconded.

Roll call vote: Mr. Hankin, aye; Mr. Fick, aye; Mr. Pachano, aye; Mr. Higa, aye; Ms. Nelson, aye

SITE PLAN REVIEW: 64 CASTLE HILL AVENUE

Dan McManmon, applicant, was present to discuss his application for an Accessory Dwelling Unit at 64 Castle Hill Avenue. He said the ADU will have one bedroom and one bathroom. It fits the requirements of the bylaw. He said he would also be adding a deck.

Ms. Nelson asked if there would be a separate entrance to the unit, if it would have a kitchen and a parking space.

Mr. McManmon said yes.

Ms. Nelson asked for the size of the ADU.

Mr. Hankin said it is 575 square feet.

Ms. Nelson asked if there were questions from the Board.

Mr. Fick said no.

Mr. Hankin said no.

Mr. Pachano said no.

Mr. Higa said no.

Mr. Fick read through the site plan review criteria.

Ms. Nelson asked if any land would be cleared for the ADU.

Mr. McManmon said there will be no changes to the land.

Mr. Rembold said a new driveway is being cut in. He suggested to Mr. McManmon that he be cognizant of the run off into the parking area.

Ms. Nelson said she is concerned about the run off from Castle Hill Avenue.

Mr. Rembold said he wanted the applicant to be cognizant so it can be dealt with during construction.

Mr. McManmon said there are no water issues on the property. He will flag it as a concern. He added that the driveway will be stone.

When asked Mr. McManmon said there will be no additional outdoor lights. There are lights by the door. He said there is a hedge to minimize light impact on the neighbors.

Mr. Hankin made a motion to approve the SPR for an ADU at 64 Castle Hill Avenue, Mr. Fick seconded. Roll call vote: Mr. Hankin, aye; Mr. Pachano, aye; Mr. Fick, aye; Mr. Higa, aye; Ms. Nelson, aye

SPECIAL PERMIT: 6 RAMSDELL ROAD

James Sorrentino was present to discuss the special permit application submitted on behalf of Hillcrest Educational Centers, Inc. for a group home at 6 Ramsdell Road. Also present were Jon Barry, Attorney for the applicant and Melissa Orazio.

Mr. Barry said Hillcrest Educational Centers work with children with emotional disabilities. The campus consists of 10 acres. Hillcrest is interested in purchasing a single-family residence in the R-2 zone at 6 Ramsdell Road to operate a group residence. He said the space meets all of the requirements of section 7.6 of the zoning bylaw. He said the character of the neighborhood would not be impacted. He said there are 6 homes on that road. All neighbors have been notified. One neighbor was heard from and that neighbor had no issues with the group home.

Mr. Barry said all of the criteria have been met and there are no impacts. He explained that the group home would be a transitional step for students who have completed the program and are preparing to return to their communities. He said there would be no more than 3-4 students in the residence at one time along with 2 staff members.

Ms. Orazio said the staff work three 8 hours shifts, the same as the main building at 5 Ramsdell Road.

Mr. Hankin said 7.6.4(2) states that the residence won't exceed 5 residents, are staff considered residents.

Ms. Orazio said not only the students will reside there.

Mr. Barry said staff are working when they are at the residence. The staff reside somewhere else.

Mr. Fick said he didn't have any questions.

Mr. Sorrentino said the house is 1200-1300 square feet. There are 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. He said it is a cape style house. He said the building will have sprinklers and smoke detectors. He said residents could be doubled up but he expected there would only be 3 students at a time at the most.

Ms. Nelson asked if there were any other questions.

Mr. Pachano, no.

Mr. Higa, no.

Mr. Rembold said Ramsdell Road goes between the two properties. He said it is not a high traffic area. He said there won't be any issues with pedestrian.

Mr. Sorrentino said ADA guidelines will be followed as they are on the main campus.

Mr. Hankin made a motion to send a positive recommendation to the Selectboard for a group home at 6 Ramsdell Road with the note that no more than 5 full time residents can occupy the home unless it is specified in the application that there will be more than 5 residents, Mr. Fick seconded.

Roll call vote: Mr. Hankin, aye; Mr. Pachano, aye; Mr. Fick, aye; Mr. Higa, aye; Ms. Nelson, aye

SITE PLAN REVIEW: 760 & 770 MAIN STREET

Continues discussion of the Site Plan Review for Guido's Fresh Marketplace. Mr. Higa recused himself turning off his audio and video.

Matthew Puntin from SK Design Group was present to address concerns raised at the last meeting.

Mr. Rembold reminded the Board that they sent a positive recommendation to the Selectboard for the special permit application for Guido's. He said the Board recommended in favor of the waiver from the parking requirements. The landscaping was a discussion that had not been settled, specifically the requirement for planting trees.

Mr. Puntin said the applicant proposes to plant 4 new trees along Main Street and to keep the 4 existing trees. He said there will be rain gardens in the parking lot. He said the third-party traffic review was good. We are in agreement with their findings. He said there was a slight discrepancy in the square footage of the building but overall, the 2018 study by Fuss and O'Neil was accurate.

Mr. Puntin said he received questions from Mr. Rembold that he clarified.

Mr. Rembold e-mailed the memo to the Board.

Mr. Puntin said the parking behind the building is intended for employees only. He said the employees have 2 means of egress in the back. He said there is a ramp at the rear of the building that meets ADA

requirements. He said if there is an employee that needs to use the handicap access they can also park in the front.

Mr. Puntin said there is a waiver request for the trees. He said the applicant will plant 4 trees and maintain another 4 trees. He said the waiver request is for 17 trees.

Mr. Puntin said he provided the information for the wall pack light.

Mr. Puntin said there will be connection fees for Town water and sewer but there is no problem with connecting to the Town systems.

Mr. Rembold said staff has no concerns about water capacity or the sewer connection.

Ms. Nelson asked if sprinklers will be installed.

Mr. Puntin said yes. He added that the path to the Big Y parking lot will remain as will the propane filling station in the back.

Ms. Nelson asked about the waiver request of 17 trees.

Mr. Puntin clarified. There is 430 feet of frontage. The bylaw requires 1 tree for every 25 feet of frontage which would be 17 trees required. He said 4 trees will be planted plus the 4 trees that will remain on the property. The waiver would be for either 13 trees or 9.

Mr. Hankin said the peer review of the traffic study suggests a sidewalk for pedestrians walking from the back of the property to the front. He said the review did not say where the sidewalk should go.

Ms. Nelson asked if a striped area along the driveway would work.

Mr. Puntin said he would like to rebut the point. He said the back parking is dedicated to employees. Signage could be installed to say employee parking. He said the driveway in that area is really tight.

Mr. Fick said he parks in the back when he gets his propane tank filled.

Mr. Puntin said if the sidewalk is a sticking point he will look at it more. He said general striping could be done.

Mr. Rembold said Big Y has a parking lot to the back but Price Chopper does not. He said maybe striping would be the middle ground.

Mr. Hankin asked why the driveway can't be widened a couple of feet.

Mr. Puntin said National Grid has a 40 foot easement. He said we can't go into the easement. He said the existing utilities will stay and the transformer will stay. He said some wires will be relocated but that has not been figured out.

Ms. Nelson said the land along the north side is not level. There is a slope behind Big Y.

Mr. Puntin said he doesn't know what the grades on the Big Y property are. He said the Guido's property slopes to the south/southwest. He said it would make sense that the slope behind Big Y would be the same. He said we can't commit to a sidewalk from the back to the front door. He suggested that maybe there could be some sidewalk and some striping.

Mr. Hankin said he is concerned about pedestrian safety. He suggested 2 feet could be gained where the driveway flares out between two poles.

Mr. Puntin said it could be a possibility.

Ms. Nelson said she would be satisfied with the striping.

Mr. Hankin said he would be satisfied with striping. He suggested that Mr. Rembold could ask the peer review why they thought a sidewalk was needed.

Mr. Rembold said he could set up a meeting with the peer review and Mr. Puntin.

Mr. Puntin said he could make the striping work he said an actual sidewalk could be difficult.

Mr. Pachano how many employees use the back parking lot per shift.

The response was all of the employees, 40-50.

He asked if parking would be changed during the holidays to provide more parking.

The response was there is overflow parking at Big Y. In Pittsfield space is rented at Stop & Shop for extra parking.

Mr. Pachano said the pedestrian safety issue is minimal because the employees park in the back and enter the store in the back.

Ms. Nelson said she agrees. She said she thinks Mr. Hankin's concerns can be addressed with striping.

Mr. Fick agreed.

Ms. Nelson said we don't want to hold up the project.

Mr. Hankin said we usually don't approve SPR until the special permit has been approved.

Mr. Rembold said the public hearing was continued to August 24 at which time the Selectboard will hear public comment. After the Selectboard decides there is a 20 day appeal period. He said the Board won't be delaying the applicant if they want them to return at the next meeting on August 27.

Ms. Nelson asked when the Conservation Commission will review the proposal.

Mr. Puntin said August 26. He said he expects there will be some changes to the drainage. He said he does not expect to reduce the parking in the back. He said there will not be substantial changes.

Ms. Nelson said she wants to be clear with Mr. Puntin about how to proceed. She said he needs to look at a wider width for a sidewalk or if we can be satisfied with striping. We need to send him away with specific instructions.

Mr. Fick said he would like to have striping and a bump out.

Mr. Hankin said he would agree with Mr. Fick but he would like to know why the peer review suggested a sidewalk.

Mr. Rembold said he would pursue the discussion.

Mr. Puntin said he will work on a sketch for a potential sidewalk so Mr. Rembold has something to pass along to the traffic engineer.

Ms. Nelson asked about the tree waiver.

Mr. Rembold said the Selectboard needs to hear from the Board with a finding as required by section 6.2.8 to authorize the deviation.

Mr. Pachano said he appreciated that the applicant reconsidered planting trees.

Mr. Rembold said the suggested tree is a Pin Oak. It is a slender tree that should not create a sight line problem. He said when the bylaw was proposed the Planning Board recommended a tree every 50 feet but the bylaw was amended to every 25 feet on Town Meeting floor. He said the amendment wasn't well thought out. He said what has been suggested meets the goals.

Mr. Hankin said he is fine with the plan. He said there are 3 River Birch in front of the building. They are multi-trunked so they will screen the front of the building and some of the parking.

Mr. Fick agreed.

Mr. Hankin made a motion to send a positive recommendation to the Selectboard for the reduction in trees per 6.2.8 with 4 existing trees to remain and 4 new trees to be planted. The waiver is for 9 fewer trees than what is required, Mr. Fick seconded.

Ms. Nelson said it should be noted on the plan the caliper of the trees at installation and a replacement plan if a tree dies.

Mr. Puntin said he wants to make sure that people coming from the south can see the sign.

Ms. Nelson said to plant a tree that can be limbed up so there is a clear sight line.

Roll call vote: Mr. Hankin, aye; Mr. Pachano, aye; Mr. Fick, aye; Ms. Nelson, aye

Ms. Nelson said the SPR application can be on the agenda for August 27 providing the Selectboard approves the special permit on the 24th.

Mr. Higa rejoined the meeting.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT:

There was extensive discussion about the Community Preservation Committee. Mr. Higa, the Board's representative, requested that the Board provide input to the CPC about the goals of the CPC and how the funds are distributed.

There was a focus on providing funds for affordable house which is one of the categories. Mr. Rembold said that since the 2016, the first year that funds were distributed, the CPC has given 39% of the funds to affordable housing.

The Board discussed the lack of funding to the Great Barrington Housing Trust. It was said that the GBHT has not proven itself but they are a volunteer committee without management. The GBHT has the new project on North Plain Road that may be a good start.

The Board did feel it was important to support historic projects and open space projects as well as affordable housing.

Mr. Rembold said there is a housing study underway that will incorporate the housing market and housing needs. The Historic District Committee has done a survey to document historic buildings and to assess buildings that may be put on the National Register. Staff has considered needs of Town Buildings.

Mr. Rembold said he hasn't had a chance to pursue the Open Space Plan because of the pandemic. He said there are projects that are envisioned and some that are being completed. There are projects that we may not know about. He suggested the Board look at the CPC document to determine if you agree or disagree with their goals. Perhaps the Board will see if something is missing that could be commented on.

Ms. Nelson agreed with Mr. Rembold. She suggested tabling the discussion to the next meeting

Mr. Rembold said the Board members can make individual comments.

ZONING:

The Board discussed the draft language for the B-3 zone that Mr. Hankin and Mr. Pachano worked on. The B-3 zone originally consisted of residential and industrial sites on both side of the river. Zoning was revised to encourage and help redevelopment of the larger sites but the zoning doesn't work well. It doesn't help with the development of the smaller parcels. An example is the laundromat parcel on School Street. With the zoning as it is written that site can only be developed as a parking lot. That goes against what zoning intended.

Mr. Hankin said it would make sense to allow mixed uses to be by-right in the zone.

Mr. Rembold said requiring a special permit kills many projects.

Mr. Hankin said special permits provide a pathway for obstructionists to kill a project by taking it to land court.

Mr. Rembold said the revised zoning is a good well thought out proposal. We can discuss it further for the 2021 ATM. He said it is in proposal form. He said some projects are completed that won't evolve into mixed use.

Mr. Hankin said he is not suggesting mandating mixed just encouraging it.

Ms. Nelson said maybe the B-3 zone shouldn't have the same geometry it has now. She said we should look at the map and maybe take a look at it on the ground either individually or in a small group.

Mr. Rembold said he wasn't sure if the airport would be ready for SPR discussion at the next meeting. He expects that Guido's can be closed out then the focus of the meeting can be zoning.

Mr. Pachano noted that there is no affordable housing element in the revised B-3 zoning.

Mr. Hankin said he followed Mr. Pachano's suggestion about leaving it out, then setting it up in a separate stand-alone section of the code.

Ms. Nelson said she would like something to plug in before eliminating it.

Mr. Pachano said affordable housing is punitive in the current B-3 zoning. He said he wouldn't support revised zoning without striking the affordable housing section.

Mr. Fick said he does not object to the revised language.

The Board set a site visit for 4:00 P.M. Thursday August 27. Meet at the Co-Op market.

Mr. Rembold said Mr. Pachano's proposed affordable housing section gives a bonus; it is not punitive.

Mr. Pachano said he thinks about incentives to allow more units for community benefits. He said he presented some incentives but there needs to be more language. He asked that there be some discussion to help him think it through.

Ms. Nelson said she doesn't have any language for a lighting bylaw. She said we will focus on zoning after old business at the next meeting.

Ms. Nelson asked if there is a date for the completed housing survey.

Mr. Rembold said he hopes to get it by mid fall. He said short term rental information is hard to get.

Ms. Nelson said she was hoping to use it to back up further discussion. She said she hasn't reached out to Mr. Bannon, Chair of the Selectboard, for a joint meeting. She said she would like that survey before dealing with specifics.

Mr. Higa said the landscape of the study will change post COVID.

Ms. Nelson said that is a valid point. She said the data is not static.

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

Mr. Rembold said he didn't have anything for the Town Planner's report.

BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES/ISSUES & CONCERNS:

Mr. Pachano said there has been a delay in the work at the Clinton Zion Church. He said the project ran into some structural issues. Work will begin again in the fall.

Mr. Higa thanked the Board for their comments during the CPA discussion. He said it was very helpful.

Ms. Nelson said she doesn't have anything for the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force. She said if people haven't seen the one way road that they should look at it. It looks nice as does the work done on the corner of Knob Hill and Lake Mansfield Road.

CITIZEN'S SPEAK TIME:

Ms. Nelson asked if there were any citizens who wanted to comment. There were none.

Having concluded their business, Ms. Nelson adjourned without objection at 8:08 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly L. Shaw

Kimberly L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary