

PLANNING BOARD

DATE: October 8, 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 & Development

In the Audience: Jack Magnati; Michelle Loubert; Eileen Mooney; Ed Abrahams;
Robert Holcomb

Ms. Nelson read the opening statement from the agenda. She announced that the meeting was being recorded.

Ms. Nelson called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Roll call attendance Mr. Hankin, present; Mr. Fick, present; Mr. Pachano, present; Mr. Higa, present; Ms. Nelson, present

FORM A's:

There were no Form A's presented.

MINUTES: SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

Mr. Fick made a motion to approve the minutes of September 24, 2020 as amended, Mr. Hankin seconded.

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

COMMON DRIVEWAY: ALFORD ROAD

Jack Magnati from Kelly, Granger, Parsons & Associates was present on behalf of Jennie Reins for a common driveway off of Alford Road. Mr. Magnati said the driveway meets the width requirements of 153-19. He said the driveway was going to be built along an existing path through the field but the grade was too steep so the driveway was adjusted to maintain a 10% grade. The driveway will be no wider than 16 feet at the Town right of way.

Mr. Magnati said the driveway will serve two houses only. The entire driveway is on land owned by Abigail Haupt.

Mr. Magnati said there will be some work done in the wetland buffer. The plan has been submitted to the Conservation Commission. He said we are waiting to be scheduled.

Mr. Magnati said the speed limit on Alford Road is 35 mph. He said there is a note on the plan stating that the site lines for the driveway location are adequate for the speed of the road. He said there is culverts and drainage along the driveway.

Ms. Nelson asked if the Fire Chief had reviewed the plan.

Mr. Rembold said the Fire Chief did review the plan. He had some concerns. Mr. Rembold read the e-mail from the Fire Chief that stated there would be limited fire service on the long driveway. It said that during inclement weather there might be adequate access. The Fire Chief, in the e-mail, recommended sprinkler systems in the houses.

Ms. Nelson asked if there would be pull outs along the driveway for passing and a hammer head turn around for emergency vehicles.

Mr. Magnati said he is not familiar with pull off at intervals along the driveway.

Ms. Nelson asked about a turning radius for fire trucks.

Mr. Magnati said he thought that had been discussed but couldn't recall exactly. He said there is a 100 ft. turning radius but it can be modified to meet the Fire Chief's request.

Ms. Nelson asked if the driveway could be approved prior to review of the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Rembold said he spoke with the Conservation agent who didn't think there would be changes. He said the agent felt it could be approved prior to the review. Mr. Rembold said the Board could wait the Conservation Commission's review. He said Mr. Magnati can be asked to modify the plan per the Board's recommendations.

Ms. Nelson asked if the Highway Superintendent had reviewed the plan.

Mr. Rembold said yes. There were no issues.

Ms. Nelson said she would prefer to wait for the Conservation Commission's review.

Mr. Hankin asked if there is a conservation restriction on the land.

Mr. Magnati said yes.

Mr. Rembold said the conservation restriction governs much of lot 1. He said there is a provision for a house site on the lot.

Mr. Hankin asked if there would be any violations.

Mr. Rembold said no the conservation restriction accounted for the driveway. He said this is not the Board's concern.

Mr. Fick asked why the plan is in the name of Reins instead of Haupt, the property owner.

Mr. Magnati said Ms. Reins is our client. He said Ms. Haupt has a vested interest in providing access to the other house site. Ms. Haupt is the recorded owner but Ms. Reins will be building her house first.

Mr. Rembold said Ms. Haupt granted the access to Ms. Reins.

Mr. Fick said the easement gives rights to the property owner but we are being asked to give the driveway permit to someone who is not the property owner.

Ms. Nelson said we can ask for a letter from the property owner authorizing Ms. Reins to get the permit.

Mr. Rembold said that is a good catch. Having the name of the applicant in a letter from the property owner would make everything cleaner.

Ms. Nelson asked Mr. Magnati to get approval from the Conservation Commission and a letter from the property owner authorizing his client to obtain the common driveway permit. She asked if he was clear about what the Board was requesting.

Mr. Magnati said yes. He said he hoped the Conservation Commission would have the item on their agenda at the end of the month. He thanked the Board for their time.

ZONING AMENDMENTS:

Mr. Rembold said he didn't have anything ready for discussion. He said the changes to the B-3 zone have been discussed and there is a consensus. He said Mr. Pachano's language for the MHX zone needs to be discussed and finalized for discussion.

Ms. Nelson said it would be nice to have the language ready for discussion at the joint meeting scheduled for October 29.

Mr. Hankin asked if Mr. Pachano could go through the proposal.

Mr. Pachano agreed saying there is a lot to go through. He said the intent is to provide density bonuses for projects that provide affordable housing or child care facilities. He said there has been some consensus about parking requirements. He said there is a lot coverage concession.

Mr. Pachano suggested reviewing a couple of sections at a time. He said this is a whole new section for affordable housing and the benefit of the community.

Ms. Nelson asked if the zone would run along the property lines or back parcel lines on Stockbridge Road and Maple Avenue.

Mr. Pachano so said the intent would be to run along the back parcel lines but it could be expanded.

Ms. Nelson said it is important to understand the dimensions.

Mr. Pachano said he would like to do the back of those lots. He said he would like to have development over the existing area then hone in on the corridors.

Mr. Rembold said if a developer provides the services, they in turn are allowed to build an extra story higher.

Mr. Pachano said yes this allows for more space to be filled in on the lot. Places along the corridors that have a lot of space will create a more urban area by focusing on areas that are already built and within existing infrastructure.

Ms. Nelson said there is a more pronounced mix of single family and mixed uses in the MXD. She said we struggled to find the balance. She said there are some practical challenges including concerns from neighbors who don't want the increased density in their neighborhoods, such as the issues on Manville Street.

Mr. Hankin said those areas are repurposed not rebuilt.

Ms. Nelson said that is true. She said there are fewer residences along Stockbridge Road.

Mr. Fick said he doesn't have a fundamental problem. He said he is more comfortable following the B-2 line rather than creating a new line. He said he hates to see some roads becoming frontage for commercial uses. He said he does not want to see Commonwealth Avenue, Blue Hill Road or Fairview Terrace become commercial areas.

Ms. Nelson said Commonwealth Avenue has the entrance to a bank off of it. She said it sounds like Mr. Fick would rather not see a proliferation of that.

Mr. Fick said correct, he would rather not see that happen.

Mr. Pachano said he is open to keeping the buildings along the route and not proliferate.

Mr. Hankin said more buildings along the street will have parking in the back so parking entrances may be along those streets.

Mr. Fick said those are not mixed use neighborhoods so that change should not be encouraged.

Ms. Nelson said those are critical elements of the proposal.

Mr. Pachano said the driver is to start to create sections for the building of community benefit such as affordable housing and day care. He said it makes sense to create along the existing areas.

Ms. Nelson wondered if the elements could be incorporated into the existing zones instead of creating an overlay.

Mr. Pachano said along corridors we have districts that can support this activity and density.

Ms. Nelson said yes. There are already parking standards. She asked if what is being proposed can fit into what exists.

Mr. Pachano said developers want to see language. They want to limit their risk. He said the affordable housing section is hard. Where do we want to build it. These two areas are corridors where affordable housing can be incentivized.

Mr. Hankin said parking requirements can be waived by the Planning Board through a special permit. Special permits can be appealed which can slow down the process.

Ms. Nelson said she asked because she has not yet done a comparative analysis to see what the proposed bylaw brings that we don't already have.

Mr. Higa said he likes the intent. He said we have to sell affordable housing to the town and he wondered how we do that.

Ms. Nelson said there are a number of affordable housing units in the pipeline.

Mr. Pachano said that a developer could build more on a property with the incentives. He said it would not be required to build only affordable housing. Developers would be able to get more for their money.

Ms. Nelson said everyone needs to do homework. She asked the Board to read through the proposal and make comparisons. There is a need to increase the housing stock in areas with walkability. We need to be careful about making it too restrictive and we need to be able to make the public understand.

Mr. Hankin suggested getting other committees and boards involved with helping the public understand. We need affordable housing and childcare. We need the support of the Selectboard and other boards. We do not need to get to town meeting and have people think that it is just the Planning Board that wants to increase density.

Ms. Nelson said we need to talk through the pros and cons and start outreach early. She asked Mr. Pachano to send the proposal in a Word document that can be edited. She asked Mr. Pachano if he could make the initial pitch at the joint meeting.

Mr. Pachano said yes.

Mr. Rembold said we will meet next on October 22. We can go through again at that meeting to discuss the context and prepare for the joint meeting.

Ms. Nelson asked if the proposal makes sense for Housatonic.

Mr. Rembold said Housatonic is dense with small lots. He said more height and density might not fit.

Ms. Nelson said she doesn't want to leave Housatonic out of the discussion.

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

Mr. Rembold State workers from MEMA and FEMA are working on new floodplain bylaws. Our local regulations need to be kept up to date. We will need to look at the bylaws to see if there needs to be any zoning amendments.

BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES/ISSUES & CONCERNS:

Mr. Pachano suggested that money for education be added to the Board's budget. He suggested \$1,000-\$1,200. He said there are people who could come for lectures to help educate the public on some of the topics we present. He said it would be nice to be able to give a stipend to the

speakers. Speakers have been in Pittsfield. Maybe we can get them to come here to provide a benefit to the Town. He said he thinks it is a good opportunity.

Ms. Nelson said BRPC has some speakers but maybe not to an expanded audience. She said she would rather leverage what exists rather than add something new.

Mr. Fick said maybe it more about the vision of what the Town could be rather than zoning.

Mr. Pachano said it could be anything. He said he would be willing to spear head. He said it would be continuing education we could all learn from.

Ms. Nelson said the boards in NY are required to have 4 hours of continuing education every year. She said she is open to trying. She said she is not sure how much participation there will be.

Mr. Fick said it might be a good thing.

Ms. Nelson suggested engaging students from UMass or RPI to give talks. She asked if this had been discussed with Mr. Grochmal.

Mr. Rembold said no but that would be a good idea.

Mr. Pachano said it could be fun.

Mr. Higa suggested having the talks achievable or in a podcast. He said it is a good idea.

Mr. Pachano said that would be a good idea.

Mr. Higa said the Step 1 meeting for the CPC took place. He said there were no applications in the affordable housing category this year. He said the Step 2 applications will be received and reviewed in November.

Mr. Pachano asked if the Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust ask for money to put into a fund.

Mr. Higa said yes. He said 10% can be banked.

Mr. Hankin said the down payment assistance program was not successful. He said a flexible bank account would have been helpful. He said he expected there to be a lot of foreclosures in the future.

Mr. Higa said he brought it up to bank more than 10%.

CITIZEN'S SPEAK:

No one spoke.

Having concluded their business, Ms. Nelson adjourned without objection at 7:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly L. Shaw

Kimberly L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary