

PLANNING BOARD

DATE: May 12, 2022

TIME: 6:00 P.M.

PLACE: Zoom Virtual Meeting

FOR: Special Meeting/Public Hearing

PRESENT: Brandee Nelson, Chair; Malcom Fick; Jonathan Hankin; Jeremy Higa;
Pedro Pachano

Chris Rembold, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Planning and Development

Ms. Nelson called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. She read the opening statement, revised by Governor Baker on February 12, 2022, from the agenda. She said the meeting was being recorded. Ms. Nelson also read Section 241-1 of the Town Code.

She called for roll call attendance:

Mr. Pachano, present; Mr. Fick, present; Mr. Hankin, present; Mr. Higa, present; Ms. Nelson, present

REORGANIZATION:

Mr. Pachano made a motion for Ms. Nelson to be Chair, Mr. Hankin seconded.

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

Mr. Hankin made a motion for Mr. Pachano to be the Vice-Chair, Mr. Higa seconded.

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

Mr. Fick made a motion for Mr. Hankin to be the Clerk, Mr. Pachano seconded.

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

Mr. Pachano made a motion for Mr. Higa to be the Planning Board representative to the CPC, Mr. Hankin seconded.

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

Mr. Hankin made a motion for Mr. Pachano to be the Planning Board Representative to BRPC, Mr. Higa seconded.

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

Mr. Hankin made a motion to recommend that Mr. Fick be the Planning Board Alternate to BRPC, Mr. Pachano seconded.

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

Mr. Pachano made a motion for Mr. Hankin to be the Planning Board Representative to the Design Advisory Committee, Mr. Higa seconded.

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

Mr. Fick made a motion for Ms. Nelson to be the Planning Board Representative to the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, Mr. Pachano seconded.

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

FORMS A:

Heather Brown was present to discuss the Form A application for 183 Division Street.

Mr. Rembold said the Board just approved the Rear Lot permit for this property. He said the Form A application is the next step in the process.

Mr. Fick made a motion to endorse the plan, Mr. Hankin seconded.

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

MINUTES: APRIL 28, 2022

Mr. Hankin made a motion to approve the minutes of April 28, 2022 as amended, Mr. Fick seconded.

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DISCUSSION:

Ms. Nelson said Mr. Rembold has been really busy with other responsibilities so he is not ready to discuss Berkshire One. She said she thought the affordable housing discussion should be put off until after the Annual Town Meeting (ATM).

Mr. Higa said he wanted to discuss Deed Modification of Land that would allow the Town to acquire land. He said a recommendation to the CPC to fund the Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust for this purpose would hold some weight. He said the GBAHT is the only Town

organization that can quickly acquire property. He asked that the topic be put on a future agenda to make a recommendation to the CPC.

Ms. Nelson said there will be discussion of CPC updates. She said that will be a good time for the discussion.

Mr. Pachano asked that the agenda item be changed to Housing. He said there is no multi-housing allowed in the I Zone. He talked about providing the opportunity to create more than one housing unit on a lot. He said there is no process or direction in place. He said one-two family houses are allowed by-right everywhere as are ADUs. He said even though the housing is allowed by-right the applicant has to go through Site Plan Review. He said traditionally SPR is for bigger commercial or industrial development.

Ms. Nelson asked if he wanted to eliminate SPR for residential uses.

Mr. Pachano said he would like to eliminate SPR for family plots.

Ms. Nelson said we would have to read through the bylaws. She said we use SPR to maintain character.

Mr. Hankin said there are controls in zoning. The Building Inspector could get the application then determine if it should go through SPR. He said SPR is required for ADUs because of push back from neighbors who wanted information.

Mr. Pachano said housing is a basic human right. He said the policies and procedures in place are from another era and make it difficult to create housing.

Ms. Nelson questioned if SPR makes the creation of housing more difficult. She said we are not the mechanism for creating housing.

Mr. Pachano said the permitting process is daunting. He said it is daunting for people to go Town Hall and the boards. He said it is unfair for the government to get involved.

Mr. Higa said there is a program put on by BRIDGE that talks about people who don't have privilege finding the process daunting. He said we need to consider all facets of the population.

Mr. Fick said he would advise caution when opening a process for one segment of the population. He said making a change could potentially open the change up for unsupervised development. We would need to consider unintended consequences.

Ms. Nelson said we can only deal with what is within the realm of this Board. She said we need to be careful about how we characterize housing. We need to consider what the objectives can be.

Mr. Fick said in a business bylaws have to be negotiated.

Mr. Pachano said there are controls in place to protect against unintended consequences. He said the housing is allowed by-right. The uses we have discussed can be done. People recognize that the processes are impediments. He said it is not just affordable housing. He said there is a great need for all types of housing.

Ms. Nelson said we have been talking about affordable housing. She said building costs are very high; this is not anything we can solve.

Mr. Pachano said we are talking about allowing opportunities. People have skills to build but the issue is the governmental process. He said he will send out information for a future discussion.

Ms. Nelson asked Mr. Pachano to form the topic for discussion.

Mr. Higa said he wants the Town to acquire property for building housing. He said the Town could subsidize the housing.

Mr. Fick affordable housing means all housing that people can afford. He said the cost to build is an impediment. He said there are many forces outside what we are doing.

Mr. Pachano said it is not just affordable housing. He said it is all housing across the board.

Ms. Nelson stressed that this Board had broadly discussed all housing.

Mr. Fick suggested that if there is going to be discussion at the next meeting there should be something specific listed on the agenda.

BOARD & SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES/ISSUES & CONCERNS:

Mr. Higa said the CPC will meet next week.

Mr. Pachano said there is an article in Common Ground regarding ADUs that is interesting.

Mr. Hankin said Chris Lee does tiny houses and ADUs. He said Mr. Lee goes to towns and holds public meetings to explain the process. He suggested Mr. Lee could host a meeting in Great Barrington.

Ms. Nelson said the Lake Mansfield design is proceeding. She said Mr. Rembold is doing a great job getting the funding.

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

Mr. Rembold said he provided a draft of the Board's report to the Town Meeting.

Mr. Rembold summarized the three Planning Board articles.

Ms. Nelson said the articles are not complicated.

Mr. Fick will present article 22. Mr. Hankin will present article 23 and Mr. Pachano will present article 24.

Mr. Rembold said engineers are working on the schematics for the North Plain Road development. The PURD will come to the Planning Board mid to late June.

CITIZEN'S SPEAK TIME:

No one spoke.

Having concluded their business, Ms. Nelson adjourned without objection at 6:52 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary