

PLANNING BOARD

DATE: August 24, 2023

TIME: 6:00 P.M.

PLACE: Large Meeting Room/Via Zoom

FOR: Regular Meeting

PRESENT: Pedro Pachano, Vice-Chair; Jonathan Hankin; Malcolm Fick; Jeremy Higa, Via Zoom

Jackie Kain, Associate Member

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

Mr. Pachano called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. He read the opening statement. He said the meeting was being recorded. Mr. Pachano also read Section 241-1 of the Town Code.

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

FORM A PLANS: KIMADA REALTY LLC

Michael Parsons was present with a Form A application for Kimada Realty LLC for two parcels of land located on the north side of Rosseter Street. Parcel A contains 0.351 acres of land. Lot 1 contains 0.415 acres of land. Parcel A is not to be considered a separate building lot; it is to be conveyed to an abutter.

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

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

65 PUMPKIN HOLLOW ROAD

Mr. Hankin recused himself from the discussion as he is an abutter. Ms. Kain was elevated to a voting member.

Michael Parsons was present with a Form A application on behalf of Jeremy Kaufman, Heather Fisch and Alan Kaufman for two parcels of land located on the east side of Pumpkin Hollow Road. Lot 1 contains 2.040 acres of land. Lot 2 contains 2.003 acres of land. There is frontage on West Plain Road.

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

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

MINUTES: AUGUST 10, 2023

Mr. Hankin made a motion to approve the minutes of August 10, 2023 as amended, Mr. Fick seconded.

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

DIGITAL EQUITY & INTERNET FOR ALL:

Andy McKeever from BRPC was present to discuss digital equity and internet for all. He said the State will be partnering with Great Barrington and 12 other towns to provide internet access and skills to access technology for education and jobs. He said there is urgency for everyone to have access.

Mr. McKeever said the goal is provide internet access to people who might not have had access in the past. He said the federal government has put \$42 billion into the expansion of high speed internet. He said the Digital Equity Act passed providing another \$2.75 billion.

Mr. McKeever said BRPC is working locally on availability, affordability and skills access. He said there is an analysis being done on existing conditions such as the availability of internet at libraries, senior centers and gaps in affordability.

Mr. McKeever said community input is important from people who work with people in the groups listed. He said this is a collaborative process. He said there will be a collaborative effort with six towns for funding opportunities that will help grow and expand opportunities.

Mr. McKeever said the time line for kicking off the project is early spring to late summer of 2024.

Ms. Kain asked if any internet companies are partnering with the effort.

Mr. McKeever said no.

Mr. Hankin asked if cell service is being looked at.

Mr. McKeever said Broadband will look at cell service but we are looking at high speed internet access.

Mr. Fick asked if the planning part would lead to looking into infrastructure for future funding.

Mr. McKeever said a portion of the \$42 billion will be put into infrastructure. He said each aspect informs the other.

Mr. Rembold said he learned from Mass Broadband Institute (MBI) that before releasing funding there will be planning sessions to inform communities of the need. He said this will be done before the buildout so that the buildout is done in a meaningful way.

Ms. Kain asked about other efforts.

Mr. Rembold said there was some effort to get fiber optic into key places in the community. He said the Ramsdell Library and Housatonic Fire Department were left out. He said there needs to be a route into Housatonic Village. He said there needs to be identification of where else it is needed.

Mr. Pachano said there is an onerous cost by the time it gets to individuals.

Mr. Rembold said cell service doesn't always work in Housatonic either. He said there is a survey on line. He asked everyone to take the survey.

Mr. Hankin said he has used both Spectrum and Fiber Connect internet. He said they are about the same as far as the speed.

Mr. Rembold said there will be focus on the fiber connection. He thanked Mr. McKeever for attending the meeting.

HOUSATONIC SCHOOL SPECIAL PERMIT AND SITE PLAN REVIEW

Steve Mack from Foresight Land Services was present to discuss the renovation proposed by Dave Carver for the Housatonic School. Mr. Carver proposes to put 8 apartments into the former Housatonic School.

Mr. Mack said Foresight Land Services is the civil engineer for the project. He said the building is 26,000 square feet. He said the building is slightly higher than 41 feet. He said the height will not be changed. Mr. Mack said the building conforms to the other zoning requirements.

Mr. Mack said there would be eight two bedroom apartments. He said there would be two curb cuts. He said the bylaws require 8 parking spaces. He said this plan provides 15 parking spaces.

Mr. Mack said the utilities will come into the building underground from Meadow Street. He said we want to get rid of the overhead lines. He said the building is served by municipal water and sewer. He said the existing sewer line will be abandoned for a new hookup to the street.

Mr. Mack said the existing municipal water service will be abandoned. A new 6 inch line will be put in. The new line will provide adequate fire protection. He said the building will have sprinklers.

Mr. Mack said there will be landscaping around the building on 3 sides. There won't be landscaping on the Housie Dome side of the building.

Mr. Mack said low level lighting is proposed. He said the plan meets the new requirements. He said a photometric plan has been submitted.

Mr. Mack said a new dumpster pad will be installed. The dumpster will be enclosed. It will be shared with the Housie Dome.

Mr. Mack said the traffic will be lower than the previous school use. Vehicles trips of 5.5 per hours at the peak time are projected for the 8 apartments.

Mr. Mack said the water usage will be approximately 40 gallons less per day than what was used by the school. He said the use is almost equal to the school use.

Mr. Hankin said he doesn't like the bike racks between the handicap accessible spaces and the handicap ramp.

Mr. Mack said he will find another location.

Mr. Fick asked if the catch basins are existing.

Mr. Mack said yes.

Mr. Higa asked if there will be charging stations for cars or e-bikes.

Mr. Carver said charging stations are not proposed.

Mr. Higa asked if there could be a cover for the bikes. He asked if the lighting would be low level bollards.

Mr. Mack said there will be building mounted light. The lights will be mounted 6-8 feet above ground. He said there will be low lights around the cars and walkways.

Mr. Higa asked if the lights will be on all night.

Mr. Rembold said the bylaw has certain restrictions.

Mr. Mack said the lighting will be according to the bylaw.

Mr. Carver said the lights will be shut off at certain times.

Mr. Pachano said there could be a plan for charging stations. He said it might be a nice gesture to make the charging stations available to the community.

Mr. Carver said there are a lot of questions about what two spaces would be used, who gets to park in the spaces, people without electric cars will park in the spaces, who will pay for the electricity for the spaces and how does it get managed. He said he would prefer not to put in charging stations because of the issues raised. Additionally, he said the technology will change over the next 2-3 years. Mr. Carver said he is reluctant to invest in charging stations. He said he would like to see how car charging evolves. He said if he is mandated he would comply.

Mr. Pachano said it is just a suggestion. He said his other comment about parking is signage should be installed to show the parking is specifically for the residents of the building. He asked if there would be enforcement if someone other than a resident parks there.

Mr. Carver said it will be managed as best it can be managed. He said the signage can be tweaked.

Mr. Pachano asked Mr. Rembold if SPR is usually not approved before the special permit.

Mr. Rembold said that is correct. He said it is helpful to go through SPR for the special permit recommendation. He said the Board can do both now or do SPR later. He said going through SPR can help the applicant to shape the last few details.

Mr. Fick said that unless we need more information, he would prefer to do SPR tonight.

Mr. Hankin asked if the units would be rentals or would they be sold.

Mr. Carver said they will be rentals per an agreement with the Town. Income will be based on 100% AMI.

Mr. Higa said there is a large attic. Is it being used?

Mr. Carver said use of the attic hasn't been decided. He said we have decided 8 units is appropriate.

Ms. Kain asked about the rectangles under the windows.

Mr. Carver said the panels will be covered. He said that area was the ventilation for the classrooms.

Ms. Kain said there is no detail of the porch over the entrance on the south side.

Mr. Carver said the entry canopy will be restored. He said we are keeping the details in accordance with Mass Historic.

Ms. Kain asked about kitchen and bathroom exhaust.

Mr. Carver said both will be through the roof. He said there will be one central system. He said there will only be a few penetrations through the brick.

Mr. Hankin asked if the windows would be restored.

Mr. Carver said yes. He said the windows are in good condition. He said there will be four operating windows in each unit.

Mr. Higa asked if there will be a garden space for residents.

Mr. Pachano said it is a suggestion as a nice amenity.

Mr. Carver said garden space could be put in if the tenants requested it. He said we will work with the tenants. He said he didn't think the gardens were a zoning issue.

Mr. Higa said no it is just a suggestion. He said if the residents didn't want garden space it could be offered to the community.

Mr. Hankin asked if there is an alternate use for the central hall on both floors.

Mr. Carver said it is a defining feature of the building. He said it is historic so it has to be left as is per Mass Historic.

Mr. Hankin asked if it can be used as a work space.

Mr. Carver said the space can be used but the physical space can't be altered. He said he expects the residents will figure out a use.

Michele Loubert from 70 Division Street said she likes that the building will still look like the Housatonic School. She said she appreciates the work that is going into it. She thanked the Board for their questions.

Ms. Loubert said she is concerned about water from Housatonic Water Works going into the building. She said the company is poor. Currently there are 800 customers, some of whom are withholding payment. She asked if a filtration system will be put in. She said the proposed apartments are beautiful.

Mr. Carver said yes, an industrial sized system will treat the water as it comes into the building. He said the cost of system is between \$20,000 and \$25,000 so we believe the problem will be solved.

Mr. Pachano read through SPR. There was a comment about relocating the bike rack and covering the bike racks.

Mr. Fick made a motion to approve SPR with one condition to relocate the bike rack so that it doesn't interfere with the accessible ramp, Mr. Hankin seconded.

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

Mr. Fick made a motion to send a positive recommendation to the Selectboard for approval of the special permit, Mr. Hankin seconded.

Mr. Higa asked if the rental unit agreement for 100% AMI is part of the deed or part of the special permit.

Mr. Rembold said there will be a development agreement recorded on the deed. He said as part of the applicant's presentation it will be part of the special permit discussion.

Mr. Higa said he wants to make a recommendation on HWW.

Mr. Pachano asked Mr. Higa if he wanted to make a recommendation. He said we need to vote on the positive recommendation.

Mr. Higa asked if there could be comments with the recommendation.

Mr. Fick asked what the comment would be. He said he understands the concern but he didn't think the special permit has anything to do with it.

Mr. Hankin said HWW doesn't have anything to do with the applicant.

Mr. Rembold said he will make sure the Selectboard gets a copy of minutes.

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

SITE PLAN REVIEW: 334 MAIN STREET

The Board began discussion of the designs for the Town Hall campus, including the park, bandstand restroom facility, driveway, lighting and landscaping. Steve Mack from Foresight Land Services, was present for the discussion.

Mr. Mack said Foresight is the Town's engineer for the project. He said it has been identified that the intersection of the driveway with Castle Street is not safe. The plan shows the elimination of the driveway from where it enters from Castle Street. He said work has been done with Historic District Commission.

Mr. Mack said the goal is to improve the parks area and to add to the playground. He said the Selectboard would like to have charging stations and public restrooms. The Selectboard brought Foresight in last year to help address the issues of accessibility, historic integrity, landscaping and making the park more usable. He said he is taking the plan to Town boards for discussion. He said he doesn't know if the Planning Board has SPR purview.

Mr. Mack said the safety at the intersection with Castle Street is greatly improve by eliminating the driveway. Currently there isn't a handicap accessible path to the monuments or the building. Those paths have been added. The driveway will enter from Main Street. The driveway currently exists as a one way only. It will be made two-way. There will also be a driveway entrance from the back of the Town Hall across from the old fire station. There will be a net gain in parking spaces.

Mr. Mack said the spot lighting will be eliminated. He said the park area will be leveled to allow for events to be held. There will be bike racks added and space for more trees to be planted. He said the elm tree in the front is not part of the scope of work. It will be left alone.

Mr. Mack said a bathroom will be added as well as dual electric charging stations. He said the Selectboard will answer technical questions.

Mr. Hankin asked about the parking.

Mr. Mack said the driveway will be 20 feet wide for fire access. He said there could be parallel parking along the revised driveway and along the building on the south side.

Mr. Rembold said there will be two-way traffic in the driveway. We may go with 3 parallel parking spaces instead of seven head in parking space. He said the HDC may have a position.

Mr. Mack said there will be a winding path with a 5% grade. There might be a walkway from the corner at Castle Street to the path. The area is steep so stairs might be required. He said from an ADA point of view the walkway might need a railing if it is over 5%. This is still being worked on.

Ms. Kain said she likes having no parking in the driveway.

Mr. Mack said there are 43 parking spaces proposed. There are 41 existing. He said 4 spaces could be lost if parking goes parallel.

Mr. Pachano asked where else the bathroom could go. He suggested creating a space for it. The bathroom will be a Portaloo unit.

Mr. Higa asked if the restroom will be accessible.

Mr. Mack said yes.

Mr. Higa asked if the restroom will be time locked, not accessible during certain hours.

Mr. Rembold said that is being discussed.

Mr. Higa asked if it would be accessible in the winter.

Mr. Rembold said it depends on the staff but yes it will be accessible in the winter.

Mr. Hankin asked why the gazebo is being moved.

Mr. Rembold said it is being moved to create a level space. He said when the playground went in there was no longer a level space to erect a tent. He said a space will be created for event use.

Mr. Mack said the Selectboard is interested in creating a terrace wall to sit on to watch events at the gazebo or the park. He said it would be a low wall along the parking spaces.

Doug Stephenson from 351 North Plain Road was present via Zoom. He said this is a great job. He suggested being careful of the root zones during the project, especially for the elm tree.

Mr. Rembold said a work zone will be established.

Mr. Pachano asked why there wouldn't be SPR.

Mr. Rembold said he felt the landscaping was not an alteration of the building. He said a formal application can be made. He said the plans are still in the early stages of development.

Mr. Pachano said the trees need to be protected. He said Mr. Stephenson's point is applicable. Mr. Pachano said he feels the plan is an exterior alteration subject to SPR.

Mr. Rembold said it is fine for a SPR application to be submitted once the plan is beyond the design stage.

Mr. Fick said if there is grading on more than 10% of the lot area SPR would be triggered.

Ms. Kain thanked Mr. Mack and Mr. Rembold for bringing the plans to the Board.

Mr. Pachano said we will hold the Town to SPR criteria.

Mr. Rembold said the Town is subject to its own bylaws. If SPR is triggered the plan will come before the Board.

Mr. Pachano said it will be left to the Town to come back if required. He said it is a good plan.

HOUSING DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pachano said there is a congregate living document that was provided. He said he would like to have Ms. Nelson present for the discussion. He said he provided basic definitions found in the Building Code. He asked that the Board take time to read so it can be discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Fick asked if the 2015 Building Code is the source.

Mr. Pachano said that is the current code. He said there won't be significant changes in the new code. He said we will discuss congregate housing as permanent housing not transient.

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

Mr. Rembold said he didn't have a report.

BOARD & SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES/ISSUES & CONCERNS:

Mr. Hankin he would like to discuss the cost of land when building multi-units.

Ms. Kain said she and Ms. Nelson met to discuss community outreach.

Mr. Rembold said these can be future agenda items.

Ms. Kain requested to present a way for the review and assessment. She said there will be an outline of agenda items and timelines will be set. She asked for this to be an agenda item.

Mr. Higa asked if there will be a Planning Board meeting on September 14 as the CPC meets that night in the meeting room.

Mr. Rembold said he will discuss with the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Mr. Higa said it was suggested that some developers could attend a Sub-Committee meeting. He said the next meeting has been pushed back a month.

Mr. Pachano said the Sub-Committee is a good place for the developers to have a discussion. He asked Mr. Higa to report back to the Board.

CITIZEN'S SPEAK TIME:

No one spoke.

Having concluded its business, Mr. Pachano adjourned without objection at 8:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly L. Shaw

Kimberly L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary