

PLANNING BOARD

DATE: February 22 2024
TIME: 6:00 P.M.
PLACE: Large Meeting Room/Zoom
FOR: Regular Meeting
PRESENT: Pedro Pachano, Vice Chair; Jonathan Hankin; Malcolm Fick; Jeremy Higa
Brandee Nelson, Via Zoom
Jackie Kain, Associate Member
Chris Rembold, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Planning and Development

Mr. Pachano called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M after some connection difficulties with Zoom. He read the opening statement. He said the meeting was being recorded. Mr. Pachano also read Section 241-1 of the Town Code.

FORM A PLANS:

There were no Form As.

MINUTES: FEBRUARY 8, 2024

Mr. Hankin made a motion to approve as amended, the minutes of February 8, 2024, Mr. Fick seconded.

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

PUBLIC HEARING: 0 NORTH PLAIN ROAD DEFINITIVE SUBDIVISION

Mr. Hankin made a motion to open the public hearing at 6:09 PM, Mr. Fick seconded.

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

Mr. Rembold said the representative for Habitat for Humanity had a conflict so she was not able to attend the meeting. Brent White, the applicant's Engineer, also had a conflict so he couldn't attend tonight's meeting. Mr. Rembold said he could provide a brief overview of the project but he requested that the public hearing be continued to a date certain.

Mr. Rembold said the public hearing notice was published in the Berkshire Eagle for two consecutive weeks prior to the public hearing date. He said all Town boards required to be notified received notification with the subdivision plan. The nine abutting Towns were also notified. All notifications required by the regulations were made.

Mr. Rembold said the special permit for the PURD was approved by the Selectboard. There was no appeal. The plan was recorded with the Registry of Deeds.

Mr. Rembold said the approved plan is for 20 single residences to be built on the site. The approved special permit is part of the definitive subdivision application. He said he is happy to

answer questions but he would prefer to defer the technical questions to another night when the full team is present.

Mr. Rembold suggested a special meeting on February 29 at 6:00 PM.

Ms. Nelson said she submitted questions for discussion. She asked if the Board should discuss the questions to be prepared for the next meeting.

Mr. Hankin said he has 100 questions that he wants to ask in person.

Mr. Pachano asked Mr. Rembold if there was any conflict with him presenting the project to us.

Mr. Rembold said there is no conflict. He said he is part of Town staff.

Mr. Pachano said he would like to allow the Board members to ask questions that would be submitted to the team.

Mr. Rembold said he thinks that would be useful.

Mr. Fick asked how much the special permit constrains the discussion. He asked if the special permit determines what we can or can't decide.

Mr. Rembold said the special permit does establish boundaries. He said the Planning Board requested that there be no sidewalks. He said the layout can be tweaked but the number of houses is set. Any substantial changes would require reopening the special permit.

Mr. Hankin said the Select Board never discussed the roadway or open space. They only discussed the number of houses during two meetings. We sent a recommendation for 30 houses but they decided on 20. That number of houses was not part of the Planning Board discussion.

Ms. Nelson asked if the Board could get a copy of the Planning Board minutes when we discussed the PURD to make a recommendation to the Select Board. She said we didn't hash out details because we knew the project would be coming back to us.

Mr. Hankin said we only saw the preliminary subdivision plan.

Ms. Nelson said she agreed with Mr. Hankin that the Board recommended 30 houses. She said now we need to work on a layout that will be cost effective for the tax payers.

Mr. Rembold said an efficient process will be appreciated but not too much can be changed.

Mr. Hankin made a motion to continue the public hearing to February 29 at 6:00 at the Town Hall.

Mr. Pachano said that is ok but he wanted to ask for public comments.

Michelle Loubert, Van Deusenville Road, asked if the project is being funded by tax payers.

Mr. Hankin said the land was purchased by the Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust. The infrastructure is covered by money from the State.

Ms. Loubert said it is important for people to know what they are paying for.

Debra Herman, 373 North Plain Road, said a number of abutters are encroaching on the project property. She said will people be able to keep the buildings and/or fences that are encroaching. She asked if there will be an impact on the properties of abutters and what can be done if there is a negative impact on property values.

Mr. Hankin said they can always apply for a rebate from the Assessors.

Jan Wojcik, 253 Long Pond Road, said he has seen the plan where houses can be located. He asked about the type of houses to be built. He asked if the houses would be efficient for energy costs for the homeowners.

Mr. Fick seconded Mr. Hankin's motion.

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

The public hearing was continued at 6:29 PM.

SPECIAL PERMIT: 320 MAPLE AVENUE

Attorney Peter Puciloski was present on behalf of the applicant along with architect, Nick Elton engineer, Marc Levasseur and landscape architect, Holly Ben Joseph.

Mr. Elton began the presentation saying the current building has a 30,000 square foot footprint with 71 licensed beds. The proposed plan will add 12 more beds with each room having one or two beds. There will be a total of 27 beds in the addition as 15 beds will be moved out of the existing building, to reduce the current bed count per room from 3 or 4 to 1 or 2, into the addition. The whole facility will have a total of 83 beds.

Mr. Elton said the property consists of 25 acres. The driveway entering from Maple Avenue is 850 feet from the entrance to the building. The driveway will make a loop around at the top in a one-way direction.

Mr. Elton said the site is sloped on the south side where the new addition will be located. A new entrance will be located between the existing building and the addition. The addition will be one story above a basement. He said there will be two paths along the addition. One path will go to the mechanical area and the second path was requested by the Fire Department as a flat area that would allow ladder access if an emergency rescue is necessary. There is an exterior fire escape in the existing building that will be removed but a second egress will be added. The addition is proposed to be 13,000 square feet.

Mr. Elton said 56 parking spaces currently exist on the site. The use requires 54.6 parking 33.3 spaces. The 56 parking spaces will remain but the parking will be reconfigured to provide three handicap spaces closer to the new entrance and two handicap spaces near the rear egress.

Mr. Elton said the buildings will be completely accessible. A new elevator will be installed to serve the addition and the existing three story building. He said the project exceeds zoning setbacks.

Mr. Elton said there is a limited amount of site lighting to be added. He said there will be six bollards in the court yard and a light will be added under the canopy in the court yard. He said there is a lighting schedule provided in the application. He said nothing is in excess of the requirements.

Mr. Elton said there are existing wall lights that will remain. He said none of the lighting can be seen from the street.

Mr. Elton there will be a court yard area for people to sit. In the court yard there will be 10 raised beds for the residents to plant. Additionally there will be bocce and shuffle board in the court yard. He said the residents are not able to wander the site so the court yard will be enclosed by a fence and a locked gate.

Mr. Levasseur explained the erosion and drainage plan. The Conservation Commission will review the plans next month. There will be roof leaders on the addition that will empty into down spouts that drain into the new storm water system consisting of catch basins and underground infiltrators for the new impervious surface per DP guidelines. He said there is no net increase in flow.

Mr. Levasseur said the new addition will require some relocating of the sewer, water, gas and electric on the site. The building is served by Town water and sewer. The existing above ground propane tanks will be buried. There will be a new transformer and a new generator.

Ms. Ben Joseph said there will be new landscaping introduced. There will be many new plants. There will be new views from the building. Similar trees will duplicate the existing trees on the site. Native plants will be planted along the perimeter. More manicured plants will be planted near the building and in the court yard. The plants are intended to provide year round color for the residents looking out their windows. She said the views from the windows are important. All the work will be done within the disturbed area. There will be 57 trees removed for the work and 67 trees will be planted to replace them.

Mr. Elton said we are in negotiations with Race Mountain Tree Company for a five year period to ensure the survival of the trees. They will do remedial work as needed or replace trees that don't survive. An annual plan will be submitted annually to the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Elton concluded the presentation going through the elevations in the plan.

Mr. Hankin asked how the addition will be heated and air conditioned.

Mr. Elton said heat pumps will be used for heating and cooling. He said units are electric. Solar is proposed. He said the kitchen uses propane for cooking as well as the commercial laundry. He said the water tanks are electric.

Mr. Hankin asked if the solar will be on the roof of the addition.

Mr. Elton said it will be located on both flat roofs.

Mr. Pachano asked how the roof is drained.

Mr. Elton said the existing flat roof has down spouts that drain to the ground. The system will be modified to drain into the underground system on the south side of the addition. New interior downspouts will drain to the underground system consisting of 2-3 catch basins and an underground retention basin.

Ms. Nelson asked if there is a way to bring the height of the elevator tower down.

Mr. Elton said there are certain requirements for clearance of the elevator. He said the stair also provides access to the roof for maintenance purposes.

Ms. Nelson asked if the elevator goes to the roof.

Mr. Elton said no. He said the stair tower goes to the roof. He said it can't be seen when off the site.

Ms. Nelson said she did a site visit on her own. She said she has concerns with the extent of the clearing for a single story building. She said the building can currently be seen when traveling along Route 23 toward Great Barrington from the Green River bridge. She said the building will be more visible when the trees are removed. She said the building can't be seen from the driveway but it can be seen traveling on Route 23.

Ms. Nelson said the trees are being cleared.

Mr. Elton said the trees are below the roof line of the existing building.

Ms. Nelson said parking lot lighting is very bright. When the trees are cleared the flood lights might be seen. She said we need to do our due diligence as a Board. She said we will see more of the building and elevator tower will definitely be seen. She said she is not against the project. She said she wanted to understand what it will look like.

Ms. Nelson asked for all the lighting to be replaced with night sky compliant lighting. She said that is the direction the Design Standards have gone.

Mr. Elton said we will be happy to do that.

Mr. Pachano said the elevator/stair tower is about 33 feet high.

Mr. Elton said he didn't think it would be an issue because it is a required egress. He said he can respond to it.

Mr. Fick there is a severe drop off on the side south of the building. He said it looks gradual. He asked if there will be fill in that area.

Mr. Elton said yes. The material from the addition site work will be used. He said there is no intent to export any material.

Mr. Rembold asked if the height requirement had been reviewed.

Mr. Elton said the stair tower is what is taller. He said it is proposed for reasonable access to the roof. They have installed a vertical 2x4 on the roof so that the eventual height of the stair tower can be seen. He said he would examine the possibility of lowering it a little bit. He said he has to meet clearances.

Ms. Nelson asked Mr. Levasseur about the purpose of the septic tanks.

Mr. Levasseur said the primary purpose is for settling before the waste gets to the pump chamber. It is a treatment before it gets to the pump station.

Ms. Nelson said this was worked out with the Town to protect the system from non-flushable items.

Mr. Elton said there are three manholes before the pump in the street. The system will not discharge non-flushable items.

Ms. Nelson asked if there are sprinklers in the existing building.

Mr. Elton said yes. He said there is no need to upgrade the existing system. The fire alarm system will be completely replaced and tied into the sprinkler system. He said there was a meeting with the Fire Department. One additional fire hydrant 50 feet from the entrance will be installed. He said a hydrant already exists 150 from the building. He said there is a tremendous flow rate sufficient to handle the need. He said no modification is needed.

Ms. Nelson asked about encroachment on the abutting property from the parking lot.

Mr. Levasseur said it has been addressed.

Mr. Hankin said it was addressed in the abutters' deed when the property was purchased.

Mr. Rembold said the Board usually goes through Site Plan Review during the review process.

Mr. Pachano said we will go through SPR criteria.

There will be cut and fill. Trees will be removed and there will be an annual report to the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Hankin asked why the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Rembold said the Scenic Mountains Act applies to the site.

Mr. Levasseur said a preliminary cut and fill analysis was done with a net 0 result.

Mr. Pachano said the numbers need to be presented when you return for SPR with this Board.

Ms. Nelson said the Board will also want the number of export trips.

The Board continued to the next criteria.

Mr. Elton said the site will be totally accessible when the project is done.

Ms. Nelson said the accessibility will be much improved.

Mr. Pachano suggested marking the pavement to direct traffic and pedestrians.

Mr. Elton said there are some markings near the entrance. He said a walking area could be created.

Mr. Fick said scenic views can be addressed at the next meeting with the applicant

Mr. Hankin said the Conservation Commission has jurisdiction over the Scenic Mountains Act.

Mr. Pachano said lighting will be addressed at the next meeting with the applicant.

The Board agreed there was enough information to determine compliance with zoning.

Mr. Hankin made a motion to send a positive recommendation to the Select Board, Mr. Fick seconded.

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

The applicant will return to the Planning Board for Site Plan Review if the special permit is granted.

MASTER PLAN REVIEW:

Ms. Kain said she sent an email earlier to remind the Board that the reports for the Master Plan were due today. She said she also sent an outline of the Planning Board tasks for future review.

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

Mr. Rembold said the zoning public hearing will be held on March 14th. He said if necessary to continue the public hearing from February 29th it could be held on March 14th.

Ms. Nelson left the meeting at 7:40 PM.

CITIZEN'S SPEAK TIME:

Claudia Shapiro, 78 Egremont Plain Road, read a statement regarding her issues with the Great Barrington airport and the lack of response from her previous comments during Citizen Speak Time.

Having concluded its business, Mr. Pachano adjourned without objection at 7:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly L. Shaw

Kimberly L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary