



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, January 10, 2012



Janet Dolber, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Barbara Gaudette, Edward Palmer and Richard Griggs were in attendance. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner was also present. Note: One (1) Planning Board vacancy.

The following members of the public were in attendance: Joseph Susienka, Cindy Key, Michael Minichiello, Milton Patnode, Bernard Cournoyer, Lee Gaudette, Mark Anderson, Normand Parkhurst, Richard Barbetta, Laura Barbetta, Stephen McHale, Alfred Barron, and James Gahan.

I. CITIZENS FORUM

None

II. ANR PLAN –REVIEW/DECISION

None

III. ONE PLUMMERS CORNER -CONT. PUBLIC MEETING

§173-49.1 [Site Plan Review]

Prior to discussion, Barbara Gaudette announced that she will abstain from voting on this matter and left her seat of the Planning Board during such review.

Mark Anderson of Heritage Design Group and Lee Gaudette/applicant provided the Board with a brief update and requested a continuance of the meeting to allow additional time to formalize a revised plan and review options to address concerns of the Safety Committee, School Department and comments raised during the Planning Board review.

Mr. Gaudette explained, since submitting application to the Planning Board the property has been cleaned up, stabilized with grassed area and split-rail fencing installed.

Mr. Bechtholdt suggested that the Planning Board not continue its review to the first meeting in February, as the applicant/engineer has shown over the past that they in fact may or may not be ready to present and instead recommended the Board continue review to February 28, 2012. Mr. Griggs asked if revised plans would be provided in advance of the meeting and Mr. Anderson confirmed.

Upon motion duly made (Palmer) and seconded (Griggs) the Planning Board voted (3-0-1 [Gaudette abstained]) to continue the site plan review to Tuesday, February 28, 2012 at 7:05PM. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Gaudette thanked the Planning Board and left.

Residents still in attendance expressed their continued frustration with the overall process of the Planning Board review and voiced admittedly their displeasure of being told at multiple meetings of these continuances. Mr. Bechtholdt noted that he understands their frustration and explained some site plan reviews are concluded after two or three meetings while others may extend beyond. Residents inquired

about what the School Committee has commented on. Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that he was not aware of communications, noting that the Board has copies of correspondence from Melissa Walker of the School Department in the file and welcomed the abutters to view the file at the Planning office, as well as if they wished to meet with him, he would be happy to.

As the abutters left the meeting room, Planning Board members expressed similar frustrations and asked if the Town Planner could notify the abutters in advance when a continuance is requested. Mr. Bechtholdt stated that he could, however it becomes a slippery slope as it is not his determination (vote) whether or not an application is heard or continued at a Planning Board meeting. Mr. Bechtholdt also expressed similar frustrations and advised the Planning Board, if they have concerns with the multiple continuances the Board should make this known to the applicant/engineer during the review not after continuing the meeting. The Planning Board does not need to grant continuance simply upon the request of an applicant/engineer; the Board should have indicated its concerns of multiple continuances and stated if revised plans are not received by a specific date the Board may consider closing the review and take a vote on the information presented. The Planning Board needs to take this initiative, as the Town Planner cannot determine when and if an applicants request will be continued or not.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minutes- December 27, 2011

Upon motion duly made (Palmer) and seconded (Griggs) the Planning Board voted (4-0) to approve the meeting minutes of December 27, 2012.

Housing Planning Workshop -Thursday, January 26th 7PM (Richard Sugden Library -Spencer, MA)

Point of information –no discussion.

Subdivision Rules & Regulations Amendments –Schedule of Hearing date(s)

Planning Board will look to schedule hearings after the conclusion of the Special Town Meeting (February 21, 2012). Mr. Bechtholdt explained that he recently met with the new DPW Director and newly appointed Superintendent and provided them with a copy of planned amendments to the Subdivision Rules & Regulations, encouraging them to review same and offer additional suggestions for amendments. Mr. Bechtholdt noted Mr. James Shuris, DPW Director and Mr. Robert Van Meter, DPW Superintendent both prefers sloped-granite over vertical and not in favor of landscaped islands in cul-de-sacs.

Zoning Amendment Article(s) –Public Hearing January 24, 2012

Planning Board zoning amendment articles concerning the Heritage Zoning District will be heard on January 24, 2012. Mr. Bechtholdt explained notice was posted, advertized and sent to parties of interest as required in preparation of public hearing.

Demolition Delay Bylaw –Discussion/Vote to Sponsor

Mr. Bechtholdt explained to the Planning Board that he was recently contacted by Kenneth Warchol, Chairman of the Northbridge Historical Commission, who informed him that he has received multiple calls from residents opposed to adopting a Demolition Delay Bylaw. Ms. Gaudette suggested that the Board may want to withdraw sponsoring an article for the Special Town Meeting and await further input and direction from the Historical Commission. Board members agreed.

Upon motion duly made (Gaudette) and seconded (Palmer) the Board voted (4-0) to WITHDRAW its consideration of the Demolition Delay Bylaw for the Special Town Meeting; the Board may look to sponsor same for an upcoming Annual Town Meeting.

Special Town Meeting –Tuesday, February 21, 2012

Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Planning Board that Attorney Henry Lane, stopped by prior to tonight's meeting; Mr. Lane provided copy of petition zoning articles which are planned to be filed for inclusion on the upcoming Special Town Meeting. Mr. Bechtholdt reminded Board members; prior to Town Meeting action the Planning Board will need to hold public hearing(s) and as such asked the Board if arrangements may be made for its Tuesday, February 14, 2012 meeting. Mr. Bechtholdt explained in order to satisfy the notification requirements (legal ads) the earliest the Board would be able to conduct its hearing would be February 14th, one week before the Special Town Meeting. Board members concurred; the Town Planner shall coordinate scheduling with Attorney Lane should the petition articles be received prior to the closing of the warrant (Spring Annual Town Meeting).

Castle Hill Estates Open Space –Discussion/Update

Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Planning Board that he has not had the opportunity to provide Town Counsel with the Deed conveyance for review and comment.

District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program

Mr. Bechtholdt reviewed with the Planning Board memorandum dated January 03, 2012 concerning the state's District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) and CMRPC's request for proposals. Mr. Bechtholdt suggested that the Planning Board submit proposal for identification, assessment & mapping of Priority Development Areas and Priority Preservation Areas as this type of reporting will be a valuable component to the updating of the Town's Master Plan. Planning Board members agreed and the Town Planner is to prepare application to CMRPC.

Distribution of Town's Sexual Harassment Policy

Mr. Bechtholdt provided Cindy Key, Associate member with a copy of the Sexual Harassment Policy; with the exception of the Board vacancy all members have received copies of the town's policy.

Master Plan Update –Next Steps/Discussion

Mr. Bechtholdt would like for the Board to start thinking of updating the Master Plan, noting the zoning amendments under consideration for the Special Town Meeting appear to be consistent with the initiatives for preserve and enhance the town historic character.

Hillside Garden Estates –Extension Request

Mr. Griggs inquired about the overall status; Mr. Bechtholdt mentioned that the subdivision roadway, sidewalk, street trees and other associated improvements have been installed for some time now, the developer is currently building homes on three to four of the lots.

Upon motion duly made (Palmer) and seconded (Gaudette) the Planning Board voted (4-0) to grant a one-year extension for date of completion through 13, 2013.

Camelot Performance Bond –Phase I

Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Planning Board that the applicant, JF Marinella Development has requested a bond estimate for Phase I of the Camelot subdivision. Mr. Bechtholdt explained that the Board's consulting engineer, JH Engineering Inc. has not been able to calculate an amount as the work completed within Phase I, as shown on the plan is not consistent with work completed on site; for instance the required sewer pump station/installation has yet to be approved by the Sewer Department. Mr. Bechtholdt mentioned to the Board that the Planning office has arranged for a construction meeting for later in the week (January 11, 2012) to meet with the developer, municipal departments and the Planning Board's consultant to review the subdivision progress. Mr. Bechtholdt noted that the developer would need to solicit the Planning Board for changes to the phasing plan and also suggested a number of conditions of the subdivision approval must be satisfied prior to lot release. Mr. Bechtholdt recommended that the Planning Board table action and schedule a site walk before establishing a performance bond amount. Planning Board members agreed and set a site walk for Tuesday, January 24, 2012 at 2:00PM. Mr. Bechtholdt will notify the developer. Board members questioned if the developer was ready at this point to request a bond; Mr. Bechtholdt shared concerns however noted the developer has the right to request a bond, it is up to the Planning Board to determine amount; adding release of lots is a separate matter pursuant to the town's Subdivision Rules & Regulations and the Planning Board's conditions of the subdivision approval.

2011 Planning Board Annual Report

Planning Board members reviewed 2011 Annual Report: The Northbridge Planning Board meets the second and fourth Tuesday of the month in the Selectmen's Chamber of the Northbridge Memorial Town Hall (7 Main Street). The Planning Board consists of five (5) elected members and one (1) appointed associate member. The Planning Board has the responsibility to review proposed development projects and make decisions in accordance with state/local bylaws and regulations. The Planning Board is assisted by the Community Planning & Development Office (14 Hill Street –Aldrich School Town Hall Annex), which is staffed by a Town Planner, R. Gary Bechtholdt II and a Planning/Conservation Secretary, Barbara Kinney. The Planning Board's official powers and responsibilities are defined in the Northbridge Subdivision Regulations, the Northbridge Zoning Bylaws, and as prescribed in Massachusetts General Laws. The subdivision rules and regulations have been enacted to protect the safety, convenience and welfare of the inhabitants of Northbridge by regulating the laying out of new lots and construction of ways providing access to lots therein. In addition to subdivision control, the Planning Board reviews site plan developments; the Board reviews proposals in accordance with Chapter 173 of the Zoning Bylaw. The Planning Board oversees development proposals from the planning stage through completion of a project. The Board is required to hold public hearings for zoning amendments articles prior to Town Meeting action. During the calendar year of 2011, the Planning Board held 20 public meetings, hosted a number of public workshops and conducted various site visits. Applications reviewed by the Planning Board include: Approval Not Required (ANR) - division of land creating new lots on existing/approved roadways; Preliminary and Definitive Subdivision - divisions of land creating lots and new roadways; Site Development plans for commercial/industrial developments; Common driveway special permits; and Scenic Road Permits proposed work that may affect public street trees and/or stonewalls along designated scenic roads. Due to the economy and continued real estate conditions a number of residential subdivisions remain unfinished and in various stages of construction. The Camelot, a subdivision consisting of 65 single-family house lots began construction earlier in the spring; with Phase 1 currently underway home construction is anticipated for next spring. The Shining Rock Golf Community continues to progress towards completion with Shining Rock Drive (portion of), Fairway Drive (portion of), Clubhouse Lane, and Linkside Court accepted as public

ways at the 2011 Fall Annual Town Meeting. The Planning Board would like to acknowledge Norwood Cooperative Bank, specifically John Galvani, Senior Vice President/Lending where after a shaky and tumultuous start with the bankruptcy of the original developer Norwood Cooperative Bank was able to manage the project to a point where the golf course was restored & sold and the roadways corrected & completed. The Planning Board would also like to thank the residents within Shining Rock Golf Community for their unwavering commitment to see this development through completion and for enduring the many trials and tribulations along the way. The Shining Rock Golf Clubhouse also completed construction in the summer of 2011; this new golfing facility has received much praise and accolades, including ranked 1 of the 10 Best Public Courses in the State –Golf Magazine and voted Best of Boston 2011 -Boston Magazine. In the spring of 2011, the Planning Board, in working with the Department of Public Works (DPW) prepared a list of deficiencies for the Castle Hill Estates subdivision. As a result of the developer's failure to address outstanding issues the Board called-in the remaining performance bond in August of 2011 for the benefit of the town to complete work. Since this time the Planning Board had monumentation (bounds) installed, legal descriptions and layout plans prepared and the following roadways were accepted as public ways at the 2011 Fall Annual Town Meeting: Hastings Drive, Windsor Ridge, Cliffe Road, Clover Hill Road (remaining portion of), and Dublin Way (remaining portion of). The Planning Board will continue to work with the DPW to prioritize deficiencies for completion. Delwyn Barnes Drive (Delwyn Barnes Estates) was also accepted as a public way at the 2011 Fall Annual Town Meeting. The Planning Board would like to acknowledge and thank Richard R. Sasseville, PE Director of Public Works (Retired) for his many years of service and assisting the Board and the Community Planning & Development office on countless projects and initiatives; his attention to detail and commitment to the town will be missed. The Planning Board would also like to thank Burnham and Elizabeth Miller for their gift, a framed color-aerial of the town displayed at the Community Planning & Development office. During the summer of 2011, Alternatives' Whitin Mill, an adaptive reuse project was awarded the coveted LEED Gold Certification for its GREEN restoration of the historic Whitin Mill (50 Douglas Road). LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a designation awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council. The mill buildings get approximately 90 percent of its energy needs through the use of photovoltaic, hydroelectric and geothermal power. Elsewhere the Linwood Mill Lofts celebrated the commencement of construction (October 2011); this mixed use project includes 75 rental units for 55+ senior housing as well as retail and commercial space. Both projects were permitted pursuant to the town's Historic Mill Adaptive Reuse zoning bylaw. The National Park Service released a Special Resource Study in the summer of 2011, and determined sites within the boundaries of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor contribute to the Corridor as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in the United States and would be eligible for inclusion as a unit of the National Park System. In October, legislation was introduced by both the US Senate and House of Representatives to establish the new John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park; this multi-state park would encompass land in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts; including the Blackstone River and its tributaries, the Blackstone Canal; the nationally significant historic districts of Old Slater Mill in Pawtucket and the villages of Slatersville and Ashton, Rhode Island; and Whitinsville and Hopedale in Massachusetts. The Senate bill was introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), John Kerry (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Scott Brown (R-MA). The House bill was introduced by Representatives David Cicilline (D-RI), Richard E. Neal (D-MA), James McGovern (D-MA), and James Langevin (D-RI). The Planning Board is excited of the prospect of a new National Park (in Whitinsville, MA) and views such as a great opportunity for future economic development in the area. During 2011, the town amended its Zoning Bylaws: (1.) expanded the Business –One zoning district within Plummers Corner; (2.) extended the Residential –Two zoning district to include properties within the Shining Rock Golf

Community; (3.) allowed “water filter plants” in multiple zones, to assist the Whitinsville Water Company in addressing the high iron-manganese content from the Carr Street wellfield; (4.) updated the Floodway & Floodplain provisions to remain compliant and eligible under the Federal Flood Insurance Program; and (5.) created a 43D Expedited Permitting provision to further the expedited permitting of priority development sites target in Northbridge for commercial and industrial development. The Planning Board is also considering amendments to the town’s Heritage zoning provisions aimed to provide for greater flexibility and opportunity for the reuse of Heritage zoned properties by providing for alternative uses which may encourage and promote the preservation of historic structures. The 2010 US Census figures were released in the summer of 2011; accordingly Northbridge increased in population from 13,182 (2000) to 15,707 (2010), an approximate 15% increase. Total population for the Commonwealth, according to US Census data is 6,547,629. The Planning Board once again emphasizes, based upon applications and remaining undeveloped land Northbridge could see a significant build-out of 300 to 600 additional house lots/units. The Planning Board cautions; as the town continues to grow the need to (re)evaluate its land use provisions; as more and more development occur the demand on public infrastructure and town services will also increase. The Planning Board continues to work on updating the Master Plan and welcomes all residents to participate and offer input on this important town document.

Planning Board –Vacancy

Point of information –no discussion.

Mail –Review

In addition to the mail listed (see attached) the Planning Board noted receipt of the following communications: Planning Board agenda for January 24, 2012 & February 14, 2012; Community Planning & Development memorandum dated January 03, 2012 regarding 43D Expedited Permitting initiative (Wes-side Connector Road); Community Planning & Development memorandum dated September 19, 2011 concerning Plummers Corner site plan review; Community Planning & Development memorandum dated August 26, 2011 concerning Plummers Corner site plan review; Safety Committee meeting minutes of September 21, 2011; Community Planning & Development memorandum dated September 07, 2011 concerning Plummers Corner technical review; (draft) Planning Board meeting minutes of December 27, 2011; Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association workshop announcement concerning January 26, 2012 Affordable Housing Workshop (Spencer, MA); Public Hearing Notice (for January 24, 2012) zoning amendment articles; (draft) Demolition Delay Bylaw; Community Planning & Development memorandum dated January 03, 2012 concerning CMRPC District Local Technical Assistance (DTLA) Program; copy of CMRPC (Regional Planning agency) memorandum dated December 01, 2011 concerning District Local Technical Assistance (DTLA) Program; email communication received December 19, 2011 from Barbara Kinney, Planning/Conservation Secretary concerning Hillside Garden Estates; Community Planning & Development memorandum dated December 19, 2011 concerning Camelot Phase I –bond request; memorandum dated January 04, 2012 from Conservation Commission concerning Camelot subdivision; (draft) 2011 Planning Board Annual Report; memorandum dated December 01, 2011 from the Office of the Town Manager regarding Annual Town Report; CMRPC Quarterly Meeting Notice (January 12, 2012); copy of letter to Town Clerk dated December 28, 2011 concerning Planning Board warrant articles (Special Town Meeting); Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife letter dated December 22, 2011 regarding NGrid Interstate Reliability Project; email communication from Amy Coman-Hoenig of MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife received December 22, 2011 concerning NGrid Interstate Reliability Project; email communication from Town Planner sent December 14, 2011 concerning Ethics Online Training; email

communication from David Doneski, Town Counsel received January 10, 2012 concerning zoning amendment articles concerning Heritage Zoning District; (revised/draft) zoning amendment article concerning Section 173-6 Heritage Zoning District; memorandum from Sharon Susienka, Exec. Asst. to the Town Manager dated January 10, 2012 concerning 2012 Spring Annual Town Meeting; memorandum from Sharon Susienka, Exec. Asst. to the Town Manager dated January 10, 2012 warrant article submission procedure; email communication from Mark Kuras, Sewer Superintendent received January 09, 2012 concerning status of pump station (Camelot subdivision); letter dated January 09, 2012 from James Sheehan, Inspector of Buildings concerning Camelot subdivision; and email communication from Mark Anderson, Heritage Design Group regarding Plummers Corner site plan application.

Other

Mr. Bechtholdt explained to the Planning Board that Guerriere & Halnon, Inc., the engineering firm hired to prepare and submit the West Side Connector Roadway Definitive Subdivision application on behalf of the Town(s) of Northbridge, Sutton and Douglas would do so later in the week. Mr. Bechtholdt reminded the Planning Board that the subdivision plan was prepared as part of the town(s) 43D Expedited Permitting initiatives. Arrangements will be made for the Northbridge Planning Board to hold its public hearing on February 28, 2012.

Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Board that he has been in communication with Town Counsel in regards to finalizing the wording of the Planning Board sponsored zoning amendment articles which will appear in the warrant for consideration at the Special Town Meeting.

Mr. Bechtholdt reminded Board members of those who still need to complete the online ethics training and offered the usage of the Planning office computers if needed.

Adjournment

Having no additional business the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of Tuesday, January 10, 2012 at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by Planning Board –

R. Gary Bechtholdt II
Town Planner

Cc: Town Clerk