



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, January 25, 2011



Janet Dolber, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Barbara Gaudette, Edward Palmer, Richard Griggs and Kevin Curtin were in attendance. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner was also present.

The following members of the public were also in attendance: Roy Uthoff (Clubhouse Lane), Judi Uthoff (Clubhouse Lane), Richard Foley (Shining Rock Drive), Rebecca Siegle (Clubhouse Lane), Pat Schmitt (Clubhouse Lane), Bill Mancini (Clubhouse Lane), Cindy Key (Clubhouse Lane), Mark Key (Clubhouse Lane), and Marilyn McIlvaine (Clubhouse Lane).

I. CITIZENS FORUM

Mark Key (Clubhouse Lane) briefly described series of events regarding incident with vehicles parked at the end of Shining Rock Drive (School Street) waiting for the school bus. Mr. Key noted two points concerning the physical space (sidewalk & roadway), how those are used and how the physical space is maintained. With sustained snow fall and current practices up at Shining Rock the roadway continues to narrow. The physical space may not change, though the traffic is likely to increase, the challenge will be moving forward.

Mr. Key added, with the lack of a town-wide standard for plowing, practice results in sidewalks being overwhelmed with snow, narrow travel ways and sightline at intersections blocked. These types of situations have resulted in traffic conflicts between those waiting for school buses and those simply trying to exit onto main roadways. In regards to plowing what is the standard; would be happy to be part of the solution.

Mr. Palmer suggested the DPW set the standard. Ms. Gaudette offered, in large measure this winter has been atypical; we do not usually see these types of storm events where snow continues to pile up. Mr. Palmer commented, once the streets are accepted the town will need to find spots to put the snow; where do you put it. Mr. Bechtholdt noted the concerns with snow piling up is town-wide, in fact the Safety Committee last week reviewed a similar situation where parents waiting for the school bus (pick-up/drop-off) parked their vehicles along the roadway which resulted in the impeding of traffic-flow as bus-stop locations/sidewalks may be piled with snow.

Other residents within the Shining Rock Golf Community expressed similar concerns; Judi Uthoff suggested if the landscape boulevard at the entrance was eliminated would help with the situation. Cindy Key and Mark Key indicated they would like to be a part of a process/discussions to help set standards for the town, so sidewalks at bus stop locations are maintained (safe for children), travel lanes are opened curb-to-curb (safe passage for vehicles and those choosing to park awaiting a bus) and roadway intersections cleared and free of sight-line obstruction. Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that he would contact the Town Manager and DPW Director concerning this matter.

II. ANR PLAN (276 COOPER ROAD) –REVIEW/DECISION

Mr. Bechtholdt reviewed with the Planning Board ANR plan entitled “Plan of Land at 276 Cooper Road Northbridge, MA” prepared by Tim Callahan of Hawk Consulting, Inc for property identified as Assessor Map 20 Parcel 95. Mr. Bechtholdt noted the purpose of the plan is to create Lot 1 containing the existing

house and garage, consisting of 40,005 square-feet and 154-feet of frontage on Cooper Road and creating Lot 2, labeled not a separate building lot, as indicated on the plan.

The Planning Board upon motion duly made (Griggs) and seconded (Curtin) voted (5-0) to GRANT ANR endorsement.

III. SHINING ROCK GOLF COMMUNITY –CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING **SPECIAL PERMIT / DEFINITIVE SUBDIVISION –MODIFICATION(S)**

Reid Blute and Mark Mastroianni of Pulte Homes New England reviewed with the Planning Board revised plan addressing the comments received and discussed at the last public hearing. Mr. Mastroianni summarized comments and concerns relative to water service have been reviewed by Randy Swigor of the Whitinsville Water Company, who provided the Town Planner with an email communication indicating that the subdivision is served by the water booster station and there is sufficient water flow and pressure to serve the change in number of units. Mr. Mastroianni also explained to the Planning Board, as part of the modification application they met with the Safety Committee in November and received approval from the Safety Committee on the increase of units and conversion from single-family to townhomes. Mr. Mastroianni also provided some numbers and calculations specific to the increase in one-time permit fees, which was initially suggested and presented by one of the residents at the last meeting.

Mr. Mastroianni then reviewed with the Planning Board and the public the revised layout for Fairway Drive (site plan) noting the request to convert six (6) single-family house lots to accommodate sixteen (16) townhomes has been reduced to fourteen (14) units.

Mr. Mastroianni then reviewed letter dated January 06, 2011. Mr. Mastroianni indicated the reduction should address the concerns relative to density and has also resulted in satisfying the setback requirements between buildings (35-foot min.). The layout plan has also been revised eliminating curb-cuts (driveways) on Clubhouse Lane; all the proposed units will be accessed via Fairway Drive. Mr. Mastroianni also noted that the missing stop sign has since been installed.

Mr. Palmer stated that he liked the new plan and has no problem with it for now. Ms. Gaudette indicated that she is still concerned with the density and felt it would not be safe. Ms. Gaudette cautioned the Board stating that the original approval had Fairway Drive connecting through to Upton, it was everyone's expectation that this would connect with the other development. Minus this, the number of units maybe should not be increased and a cul-de-sac should be added.

Ms. Dolber suggested that the original approval did not require a cul-de-sac; Mr. Griggs added that the Board can not rely on what happens in Upton. Ms. Gaudette agreed, may be stuck with Fairway Drive being a dead-end for now, however why should we add additional units and potentially exacerbate the traffic situation. Ms. Dolber offered that the proposal complies with our regulations and zoning for condo vs. single-family. Mr. Palmer stated that the Fire Department could back-up.

Mr. Blute (Pulte Homes) noted that it was not their intentions to modify the roadway; wanted to present a proposal that made sense and fit within the context of the surrounding area of Clubhouse Lane, Sandtrap Court and Linkside. If the Board decided to require a cul-de-sac as part of its approval we would bring that

back to our folks for consideration. Mr. Palmer indicated that adding a cul-de-sac makes sense. Mr. Griggs noted; adding a cul-de-sac is not going to add an additional access or egress; to add a cul-de-sac does not make sense, the Fire Chief reviewed proposal and appears not to have concern with access. Mr. Bechtholdt suggested if the Board is going to consider requiring a cul-de-sac they do so by requiring a temporary cul-de-sac (via easements and not change roadway layout) that way when/if the property in Upton is developed the roadway would become a throughway as originally intended and the cul-de-sac removed.

Judi Uthoff (Clubhouse Lane) shared the safety concerns, however felt the lots should converted to condo-units instead of single-family lots and make more sense aesthetically. Rebecca Siegle (Clubhouse) agreed with Mr. Blute with blending of townhome units, however could be improved with a turn-around. Marilyn McIlvaine inquired about the number of bedrooms (three).

Cindy Key (Clubhouse Lane) asked about the 50-foot buffer. Ms. Gaudette indicated that she too was concerned about this requirement initially, however after reviewing the regulation and approval for Shining Rock Golf Community realized this provision or requirement was meant for preserving a buffer for the existing homes along Upton Street and School Street. The Pulte proposal is consistent with the original approvals and the definitive subdivision plan.

Mark Key (Clubhouse) inquired about the status of the water booster station. Bill Mancini (Clubhouse Lane) explained that he was not originally in favor of the proposal however is, adding that he would like to see a day when the construction is done and see this proposal a way to advance this project. Safeguards should be put in place (cul-de-sac) that may have been overlooked.

Ms. Dolber looked to the Planning Board, applicant and general public for additional input and comments; having none Ms. Dolber called to close the public hearing. Upon motion duly made (Griggs) and seconded (Curtin) the Planning Board closed the public hearing.

Mr. Griggs stated that he is comfortable with proposal as is, as the Fire Chief has reviewed and not sure what a temporary cul-de-sac would accomplish. Ms. Dolber agreed and noted the applicant has reduced the density and eliminated the driveways on Clubhouse Lane. Ms. Gaudette stated she is opposed to the proposal, too many units should be maximum of twelve (12) with a cul-de-sac. Mr. Curtin indicated that he would support twelve (12) units. Mr. Palmer explained that he does not have issue with the proposal, adding if it remained homes will likely never get finished. Mr. Palmer suggested if we can get a cul-de-sac would be satisfied with the fourteen (14) units.

Upon motion duly made (Griggs) and seconded (Curtin) the Planning Board voted (4-1 [Gaudette opposed]) to grant special permit modification to allow fourteen (14) townhomes on Fairway Drive as presented (on site plan entitled "Shining Rock Golf Community –Fairway Drive" prepared by Marchionda & Associates, L.P. and dated October 06, 2010 & revised through January 03, 2011).

Mr. Bechtholdt noted that he will prepare the Certificate of Approval for the special permit and will add as a condition of approval; submittal of an ANR plan to adjust the property lines, suggesting that the ANR plan should also reference the special permit. Mr. Bechtholdt will prepare the decision for the Planning Board.

Upon separate motion duly made (Griggs) and seconded (Curtin) the Planning Board voted (5-0) to approve the definitive subdivision modification to eliminate the stamped concrete at the intersection of Fairway Drive, Sandtrap Court and Clubhouse Lane. Mr. Bechtholdt will prepare the approval for the subdivision modification.

IV. GREEN COMMUNITIES ACTION PLAN –REVIEW/DECISION

CRITERION #1 BY-RIGHT SITING FOR RENEWABLE / ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FACILITIES

Ms. Dolber informed the Planning Board, since the last discussion on Wind Energy Facilities (wind turbines) she along with Mr. Bechtholdt met with Judi Uthoff, Charles McCauley and Tom Potenza to discuss review wind turbines and the potential health and safety concerns associated. Ms. Dolber added after discussions and review of the material presented by Mr. McCauley it seems Northbridge may not be ready to allow wind turbines by-right. With that said, Mr. Bechtholdt added that the town may still be better served having provisions in place that specifically address this type of use through the issuance of a special permit. Ms. Gaudette agreed.

With that Mr. Bechtholdt will prepare a letter for the Board of Selectmen and Green Committee indicating that the town should pursue provisions and consider a zoning bylaw allowing wind facilities by special permit. Mr. Bechtholdt added that in addition to providing by-right siting provisions the state also has a model bylaw for special permit proceedings. Mr. Bechtholdt will provide copies of this to the Planning Board, as well as the Green Committee and Building Inspector for review and consideration.

Mr. Bechtholdt also mentioned that the State's Department of Energy Resources –Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs has prepared a model as-of-right zoning bylaw for solar photovoltaic installations, which is another component of Criteria 1 of the Action Plan.

Board members commented that it appears unlikely that any zoning article would be ready for the Spring Annual Town Meeting regarding the Green Communities Action Plan. Mr. Bechtholdt added in order for the town to adopt such provisions the Planning Board will need to hold public hearings on zoning amendment articles which would also requires town meeting action.

OLD / NEW BUSINESS

Minutes –Approval

None –Tabled to the next meeting of the Planning Board.

FEMA Re-evaluation of Flood Hazards –Discussion

Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Planning Board that as a result of FEMA's re-evaluation of the Flood Insurance Rate Map(s), Northbridge will need to amend its local provisions to remain eligible under the flood hazard management program. See below.

Shining Rock Golf Clubhouse –Proposed Alteration

Tim Gordon, on behalf of SR Golf Club LLC reviewed with the Planning Board proposed site plan alterations for the clubhouse facility at 91 Clubhouse Lane. Mr. Gordon indicated that after about a year of opening

with the temporary trailer has a good idea of how golf operations perform day to day at Shining Rock Golf (comparable to his Hopkinton GC).

Planning Board members congratulated Mr. Gordon on the courses recent accolades and recognitions which include one of the top best public courses in Massachusetts and one of the top best new courses in the US.

Mr. Gordon reviewed proposed site alterations as shown on plan entitled “Proposed Landscape Plan” prepared by J & Company, Inc dated January 19, 2011 including plan sheets C-1; C-2 & C-3. As described in letter dated January 20, 2011 and illustrated on plan, Mr. Gordon explained the modifications include rotating the building 90-degrees, elevating the building to enhance views overlooking greens, adding a full-basement, which will also allow us to eliminate the separate storage shed, and incorporate an outdoor patio behind the clubhouse.

Ms. Gaudette commented that she is really impressed with the changes and feels the proposed will be an improvement to what was originally planned and approved by the Planning Board; good job. Ms. Dolber agreed.

After taking input from the general public and noting that the outdoor patio would consist of 2-levels for seating/gathering for up to 130 the Planning Board acted on the request for consideration as a minor modification.

Upon motion duly made (Griggs) and seconded (Curtin) the Planning Board voted (5-0) to consider and approve modification for the Shining Rock Golf Clubhouse as presented. As part of its consideration the Planning Board received the following Planning memorandum dated January 21, 2011; J & Company letter dated January 20, 2011; and the site plan alterations as shown on plan entitled “Proposed Landscape Plan” prepared by J & Company, Inc dated January 19, 2011 and consisting of sheets (C-1, C-2 & C-3).

Spring Annual Town Meeting –May 03, 2011

Date of the Spring Annual Town Meeting noted above.

Planning Board Article(s) –Discussion/Vote to Sponsor

The Planning Board reviewed Community Planning & Development memorandum dated January 07, 2011 regarding the final flood elevations prepared by Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation’s Flood Management Program, in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Upon motion duly made (Palmer) and seconded (Gaudette) the Planning Board voted (5-0) to sponsor zoning article to amend the Town of Northbridge Zoning Bylaws Section 173-18 [Floodway and Floodplain District].

The intent of the amendment is to adopt the (revised/updated) FEMA’s Flood Insurance Rate Map for Northbridge. Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that the Planning office is coordinating this effort with Christopher Markesich of the Flood Hazard Management Program who will assist us in the updating of our local bylaw to ensure Northbridge remains compliant and eligible under the flood insurance program.

Mr. Bechtholdt reviewed with the Planning Board the property at 690 Church Street (Varky's Cleaners) and its current pre-existing nonconforming status.

Upon motion duly made (Palmer) and seconded (Gaudette) the Planning Board voted (5-0) to sponsor zoning article to amend the Town of Northbridge Zoning by expanding the Business –One (B-1) Zoning District located within the vicinity of Plummer's Corner (Church Street) to include properties identified as Assessor Map 14 Parcel(s) 57, 56 and 55.

The proposed zoning amendment would extend the B-1 Zone from Providence Road/Church Street (Plummer's Corner) through to 690 Church Street (Varky's Cleaners). The properties are currently zone Residential –Three (R-3).

Mr. Bechtholdt reviewed with the Planning Board that he, along with the Town Manger, Inspector of Buildings met with Randy Swigor of the Whitinsville Water Company concerning the iron content from the Carr Street wells; as a result the Water Company is considering installing a water filter plant to remove the iron. Mr. Bechtholdt continued, noting that the underlying zone where the filter plant would be located does not currently permit this type of use. Mr. Bechtholdt also noted that the Water Company may seek a waiver from the state for a public utility, however in talking with Mr. Swigor this option may be a long drawn out process, another option in talking with the Building Inspector would be to amend our zoning.

Upon motion duly made (Palmer) and seconded (Gaudette) the Planning Board voted (5-0) to sponsor zoning article to amend the Town of Northbridge Zoning Section 173-12 Table of Use Regulations by permitting water filter plant in the Residential, Business and Industrial zones By-Right (P) and in the Heritage zone via Special Permit (S).

The intent of the proposed amendment is to allow water filter plant facilities to be constructed in all zones where currently such facilities may only be permitted in the Industrial zones.

Mr. Bechtholdt reminded the Planning Board that one of the Selectmen (James Athanas) at the January 10th Board of Selectmen's meeting suggested that the town consider amending its zoning by increasing the lot area requirements within the Residential zone to help curb the growth in town.

Mr. Palmer noted that this was considered before and failed at Town Meeting. Mr. Bechtholdt agreed however recalled the zoning amendment proposed not only sought to increase the lot area minimums but also proposed to increase the lot width and setback requirements. Ms. Gaudette remembers the town considering the increase to lot area but does not recall looking to change the setbacks.

Mr. Bechtholdt mentioned that he will look into this further and suggests if the Planning Board wants to consider the lot area once again will include this matter on the next agenda for discussion. Mr. Bechtholdt also noted pursuant to Mass General Laws, the Board will need to hold a public hearing for each of the proposed zoning bylaw amendments in advance of Town Meeting.

Mr. Bechtholdt added, at this time in regards to potential street acceptance articles (Delwyn Barnes Drive and those within Shining Rock Golf Community) still awaiting receipt of additional documentation and correspondence from Town Counsel signifying that everything seems to be in order. Depending on where

things are at as we closer and closer to the closing of the warrant these street acceptance articles may or may not be include for the Spring Annual Town Meeting.

2011 SATM Warrant –Close Friday, March 18, 2011

Date of the closing of the warrant for the Spring Annual Town Meeting noted above.

Housing Production Plan –Status/Review

Mr. Bechtholdt noted that he would like the Planning Board to review the draft and look to finalize things a bit more before presenting to the public. Mr. Bechtholdt suggested that he will include this on the next agenda for discussion/review.

Castle Hill Estates –MGL CH 41 SEC 81U

Mr. Bechtholdt explained that he provided the Board with copy of the Mass General Law provision and suggested that the Planning Board may look to table this until spring, when the developer could potentially address the remaining outstanding issues as outlined by the Director of Public Works and as discussed by the Planning Board at its meeting of October 12, 2010. Planning Board agreed to table this matter until April/May 2011.

Master Plan update –Discussion

No discussion.

Mail –Review

In addition to the mail listed (see attached) the Planning Board noted receipt of the following communications: email communication (received January 24, 2011) from Town Counsel regarding review of Delwyn Barnes Drive layout plans and acceptance documents for street acceptance and copy of memorandum (August 2010) from Town Counsel regarding status of layout and street acceptance documents for Shining Rock Golf subdivision;

Other

Mr. Bechtholdt informed the Planning Board that a public workshop has been scheduled for 6:00 PM on Wednesday, February 16, 2011 at the Sutton Senior Center (Hough Road) to follow-up on one of the 43D Expedited Permitting initiatives. At this public workshop attendees will review and discuss the findings evaluated by CMRPC (our regional agency) regarding the existing roadway networks and properties east of RT 146 between the highway, Lasell Road and Lackey Dam Road (Sutton/Northbridge). Mr. Bechtholdt noted it would be great to have some representatives from Northbridge, and indicated that abutters will also receive an invitation in the mail. The purpose of the meeting is to review the roadway study prepared by CMRPC, as well as, a series of draft alternatives as to how the potential buildout of these undeveloped parcels may affect vehicular movement within the area.

Mr. Bechtholdt explained to the Planning Board that during the Board of Selectmen meeting (January 24, 2011) he mentioned that he would be willing to meet with the Selectmen to review what the Planning office and Planning Board have done to help promote economic development in Northbridge.

Mr. Bechtholdt suggested to the Planning Board these efforts include adopting provisions to allow for the rehabilitation and preservation of the Linwood Mill for mixed-use development, as well as the brownfields program that Northbridge Auto is currently participating in (brownfields redevelopment).

Ms. Gaudette suggested perhaps we should ask Mr. & Mrs. Giannopoulos about their thoughts on the town's efforts to promote economic development (Linwood Mill).

Additionally, Mr. Bechtholdt noted efforts include designating Priority Development Sites (PDS) in Northbridge and the various guidance documents prepared the last 2 to 3 years. Economic development is more than just creating a webpage or inclusion in a listserve which may announces potential manufacturing/office/R&D facilities are interested in locating outside 495. Being proactive is looking at your zoning, your land use, and determining if they are consistent with the desires of the town, identifying your infrastructure (water/sewer/etc) and looking at ways to expand/provide services in appropriate locations, not only to attract economic development but to promote the highest and best use.

Mr. Bechtholdt mentioned that he has contacted the Town Manager and asked to meet with him and the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen (James Marzec) to review what the Planning Board has done to promote economic development.

Mr. Curtin announced that he attended the last CMRPC regional meeting on Wind Energy and will provide the Town Planner with the handouts for distribution to the other members.

Adjournment

Having no additional business the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of Tuesday, January 25, 2011 at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Gary Bechtholdt II
Town Planner

Cc: Town Clerk