



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, February 23, 2021



Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, MGL Chapter 30A Section 18 and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings of the Northbridge Planning Board shall be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public may adequately access the proceedings as provided in the Order.

Recognizing the presence of a quorum, Chair Brian Massey (Yes) called the meeting (virtual meeting) to order at 7:00PM. Abdul Kafal -Yes; Harry Berkowitz -Yes; Rainer Forst -Yes; and Jim Berkowitz -Yes were in attendance. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner and Barbara A. Kinney, Planning Administrative Assistant were also present. One (1) Planning Board vacancy remains (Associate Member). Attendees also included George Connors, Attorney; Stan Piecewicz; and Chris Quirk.

I. CITIZENS FORUM

None

II. UPTON STREET (Rezoning Proposal) -DISCUSSION

Assessors Map 25 Parcel(s) 151 & 162

Attorney George Connors, Stan Piecewicz and Christopher Quirk met with the Planning Board as a follow up to their October 2020 discussion about potential zoning amendments for subject property on Upton Street (upper portion) currently zoned Industrial, where they desire to develop land as residential. Attorney Connors reviewed with Planning Board letter submittal along with three (3) proposed zoning amendment articles they hope to consider at the 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting.

Planning Board reviewed with proponents Community Planning & Development memorandum dated February 16, 2021, in which the Town Planner does not recommend the Planning Board support (or sponsor) proposed zoning amendments. B. Massey agreed, indicating the Planning Board would need more time to review before offering its support, noting something of this nature requires more in-depth consideration than one or two meetings of the Planning Board.

Mr. Bechtholdt suggested a Housing Production Plan be prepared for the town to identify housing needs etc. before the Planning Board looks to rezone land from Industrial to Residential. Board members agreed.

H. Berkowitz expressed concerns with the topography and layout of Upton Street if a develop along the upper portion was to occur, citing potential traffic concerns and potential drainage concerns along the existing, lower portion of Upton Street. J. Berkowitz indicated he would support an alternative to industrial use but shared concerns with Mr. Berkowitz; other members concurred. R. Forst shared similar concerns with potential traffic, noting that he would not support any proposal that would make Upton Street a thru-road and would need to see clear language excluding access to a development from the lower portion of Upton Street.

B. Massey indicated the Planning Board does not appear to be in a position to support (or sponsor) any zoning amendment at this time, noting they could submit via petition, however, would still require a public hearing of the Planning board before Town Meeting action. G. Bechtholdt offered to answer further questions after the meeting. C. Quirk thanked the Board, suggesting they would need to talk with the property owner about extending their P&S agreement through to the 2021 Fall Annual Town Meeting (October 2021).

III. DIGITAL SUBMISSION STANDARDS-CONT. PUBLIC HEARING

Amendment to Subdivision Rules & Regulations

B. Massey noted the public hearing had been continued at the last scheduled meeting due to the absence of two (2) members. Mr. Massey sought input and comment from the Board and public in attendance. Having none; Mr. Massey looked to the Planning Board to close the public hearing.

Upon motion made (H. Berkowitz) and seconded (J. Berkowitz), the Planning Board voted 5-0 by roll call vote of H. Berkowitz -Yes; J. Berkowitz -Yes; A. Kafal -Yes; R. Forst -Yes; and B. Massey -Yes to close the Public Hearing. Upon motion duly made (H. Berkowitz) and seconded (J. Berkowitz), the Planning Board voted 5-0 by roll call vote of H. Berkowitz -Yes; J. Berkowitz -Yes; A. Kafal -Yes; R. Forst -Yes; and B. Massey -Yes to amend the Subdivision Rules and Regulations by incorporating the digital submission standards.

OLD / NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minutes –February 09, 2021

Tabled to next meeting.

Planning Board Meeting of March 23, 2021 -Vote to Cancel

Upon motion duly made (H. Berkowitz) and seconded (R. Forst), the Planning Board voted 5-0 by roll call vote of H. Berkowitz -Yes; J. Berkowitz -Yes; A. Kafal -Yes; R. Forst -Yes; and B. Massey -Yes to cancel the Planning Board meeting of March 23, 2021.

2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting (SATM) -Tuesday, May 04, 2021 (7:00 PM)

Point of Information -no discussion.

2021 SATM Warrant Closes -Friday, March 05, 2021 (12:00 PM)

Point of Information -no discussion.

2021 SATM -Planning Board Vote to Sponsor Article(s)

Planning Board did not offer any zoning amendments for consideration.

Housing Choice Act of 2020 (Bill 5250) -Review/Discussion

Planning Board awaiting input from the Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer; after which proposed amendments, if any will be considered in advance of the 2021 Fall Annual Town Meeting (October 2021).

Presidential Farms Phase II & V -Performance Surety Bonds

Tabled until weather conditions improve (snow cover) to allow the Planning Board's consultant (Graves Engineering, Inc.) to conduct necessary site inspections and updated construction estimates.

Subdivision/Site Development -Status/Updates

B. Massey spoke with the Director of Public Works regarding the pump station at the Camelot, which has been down for some time; noting the Sewer Superintendent is reviewing potential replacement pump with the Developer. Mr. Massey explained the Sewer Department will be monitoring of all the pump stations (accepted/unaccepted) moving forward. The Developer(s) will remain responsible for any repairs, off-hours calls, etc. until the project is accepted by the Town. Mr. Massey noted he is hopeful the DPW Director and Sewer Superintendent will be more proactive in keeping the Planning Board up to date with progress of subdivision developments and any ongoing concerns.

Planning Board Associate Member -Vacancy

Point of Information.

Planning Board Concerns

None noted at this time.

Mail –Review

In addition to mail listed (attached) Planning Board noted receipt of the following communications: Planning Board Agenda dated February 23, 2021; Draft Planning Board Agenda for March 09, 2021; Memo dated February 16, 2021 to Planning Board from Town Planner regarding Upton Street -Zoning Amendment; Letter dated February 15, 2021 to Planning Board from George F. Connors regarding zoning articles for Upton Road; Wording for the Digital Submission Standards; Document dated February 01, 2021 from KP Law concerning Housing Choice Act of 2020 Update; Email dated February 16, 2021 Sewer Superintendent from Town Planner concerning The Camelot and Hemlock Estates and the pump stations; Memo dated February 09, 2021 to Planning Board from Turning Point Engineering regarding Stone Hill Condos; Email dated February 16, 2021 to Town Planner from Graves Engineering concerning Stone Hill Condos sightlines; Memo dated February 09, 2021 to Town Manager from Tree Warden, Director of Public Works, & Town Engineer regarding Pruning and/or Trimming of 22 Hazardous Public Shade Trees; Northbridge Tree Warden Public Shade Tree Removal Permit with list of trees; Community Planning & Development Weekly Report February 08-12, 2021; Community Planning & Development Weekly Report February 15-19, 2021; Planning Board Annual Report for 2020; Planning Board Schedule of Meeting Dates 2021.

Other

G. Bechtholdt sought Planning Board support to consider an application to the Community Preservation Committee for land acquisition of the Castle Hill Farm property via CPA funds. Board members agreed and suggested Mr. Bechtholdt contact other local boards/committees, etc. to see if there was mutual interest to do so. Mr. Bechtholdt noted that he has had informal discussions with the Owner of same and will follow up with the property owner before taking this next step;; adding he will inform the Community Preservation Committee of the Board's desire to acquire the property, so they may consider next steps as well. Mr. Bechtholdt informed the Board that a comment letter on their behalf was sent to Sutton, Uxbridge & Douglas (Planning Board) for the proposed Blackstone Logistic Center (warehouse/distribution facility).

ADJOURNMENT

Having no additional business, the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of February 23, 2021 at or about 8:35 PM.

[Prepared by Barbara A. Kinney, Planning Administrative Assistant]

Approved by the Planning Board:

Submitted by:

R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner

Cc: Town Clerk
/File