



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, April 13, 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 called the meeting (held via ZOOM) to order at or about 7:00 PM with Harry Berkowitz, Rainer Forst, Abdul Kafal, and Jim Berkowitz in attendance. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner was also present with Andrew Howden, Associate Member candidate also in attendance.

I. PLANNING BOARD ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Vote to Recommend Appointment of Andrew Howden

Upon motion duly made (H. Berkowitz) and seconded (J. Berkowitz) the Planning Board voted (5-0) to recommend the appointment of Andrew Howden to serve as Associate Member of the Planning Board. Arrangements to be made with the Board of Selectmen for consideration of same at its next available meeting. G. Bechtholdt will coordinate with the Town Manager and Office of the Town Clerk regarding this appointment. Board members thanked A. Howden for his interest and willingness to volunteer his time to serve on the Planning Board.

II. CITIZENS FORUM

None

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None

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minutes –January 12, February 09 & 23, and March 09, 2021

Upon motion duly made (J. Berkowitz) and seconded (H. Berkowitz) the Planning Board voted (5-0) to approve the meeting minutes of February 09, February 23, and March 09, 2021. Planning Board tabled action on meeting minutes for January 12, 2021.

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

Point of information -no discussion. Copy of Warrant provided to Planning Board.

Planning Board Expenses -Vote to Authorize Expenditures

Upon motion duly made (H. Berkowitz) and seconded (A. Kafal) the Planning Board voted (5-0) to authorize expenditure from its Planning Board expense budget (FY2021) for the purpose of, if so required, to pay for engineering consulting services of Graves Engineering, Inc. G. Bechtholdt informed the Board the Developer

of the Hemlock Estates has been unresponsive for requests of additional funds for the project's Review & Inspection account (R&I Account), which has resulted in the Board's consultant not being able to perform a site inspection of the subdivision development for the purpose of preparing a comprehensive punchlist of remaining work. Mr. Bechtholdt indicated Planning will continue to pursue funds from Developer and others where moneys may be owed for services rendered by Graves Engineering, Inc., the Board's consulting engineer.

Floodplain Bylaw Provisions -Zoning Amendment (public hearing TBD)

G. Bechtholdt advised the Board that Planning has not received any communication or guidance from the Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer regarding necessary and required zoning updates (amendments) to remain in compliance with the FIRM /flood insurance program. Mr. Bechtholdt noted that he did send an email communication in advance of the meeting; once he hears back from the Building Inspector will let the Board know. B. Massey suggested he would contact the Building Inspector as well.

Housing Choice Act of 2020 (Bill 5250) -Zoning Amendment (public hearing TBD)

See discussion item above; no communication/guidance from Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer regarding necessary zoning updates (amendments) to comply with the Housing Choice Act of 2020.

Presidential Farms Phase II & V -Performance Surety

Planning Board in receipt of Graves Engineering, Inc. report dated March 26, 2021 and construction estimates for Phase II (Washington Street) and Phase V (remaining portion of Roosevelt Drive). G. Bechtholdt informed the Board that David Bossi, Developer was unable to attend tonight's meeting; Planning Board tabled action. Mr. Bechtholdt will confirm with Mr. Bossi availability for next scheduled meeting(s).

MGL CH 41 SEC 81U -Proceedings /Hemlock Estates

Matter tabled; as the Planning Board's consulting engineer (Graves Engineering, Inc.) needs to provide an updated punchlist of remaining work for Hemlock Estates. Planning Board will look to initiate calling in the performance surety held once a punchlist is prepared and shared with the Developer. -see discussion item above (Planning Board Expenditures).

Subdivision/Site Development -Status/Updates

G. Bechtholdt noted the Camelot subdivision continues to progress with the new contractor and development team. Mr. Bechtholdt also noted that site construction at Moon Hill Estates continues and the subdivision known as Mike's Way has recently commenced. Mr. Bechtholdt stated the Planning Board's Consultant (Graves Engineering, Inc.) and the town's Conservation Agent continue to do a good job overseeing and inspecting the various developments. Mr. Bechtholdt mentioned the developer for Presidential Farms appears to do a fairly good job balancing subdivision improvements and home construction; B. Massey agreed. Mr. Bechtholdt suggested he would be in contact with the developer of Leonardo Estates, where Joe Leonardo focus has been on home construction and note completing improvements to the subdivision (Windstone Drive). Mr. Massey agreed and felt the Board needs to hold developers more accountable, suggesting to holdback issuance of permits until progress is made.

Planning Board Concerns

None

Mail -Review

Planning Board acknowledged receipt of electronic copy (pdf) of mail received, including notices from abutting towns, etc. Members noted a preference to receiving the mail in this format moving forward. G. Bechtholdt indicated that he would relay this to Barbara Kinney, Planning Admin Assist. however, suggested may still need to prepare a mail list for the record.

Other

R. Forst, Planning Board representative on the Charter Review Committee advised the Board that the Committee is scheduled to have its first virtual meeting on Thursday, April 15, 2021. Mr. Forst provided the Board with an excerpt from the Town's Charter; Planning Board [Section 3-5], questions the status and need of a master plan. G. Bechtholdt noted the town's last master plan is dated 1994, suggesting this is an important guidance documents for the town (planning board, zoning board, conservation, etc.), noting efforts to prepare a comprehensive update (elements of the master plan) have been initiated, however it has been difficult to find residents to commit and dedicate the necessary time and effort to prepare such a document. The costs associated with preparing a master plan may range between \$100-150K; Mr. Bechtholdt suggested the town should pursue updating its mater plan and hire not only a consultant but a facilitator to coordinate and work with an ad-hoc update committee. Mr. Forst appreciated the input but wanted to know from the Board what he should present to the Charter Review Committee; B. Massey suggested waiting to see what the review committee is looking for and report back to the Planning Board. H. Berkowitz indicated he served on the Charter Review Committee years ago and recalled the committee reviewing the charter provisions and recommending changes, if anywhere necessary to Town Meeting. Mr. Forst will keep the Planning Board updated as the Charter Review Committee conducts its review. Planning Board acknowledged receipt of letter (copy of) from Northbridge Community Planning & Development to the Planning Boards of Douglas, Sutton & Uxbridge regarding the proposed warehouse and distribution facility proposed on Lackey Dam Road (/Rt 146 N), reiterating their concerns with potential traffic resulting from the project. Mr. Bechtholdt informed the Planning Board of the need to (annual) provide the Worcester Registry of Deeds with their signatures; members will be invited to stop by the Planning office after Town Election (May 18) to sign the Registry form certifying names, terms, and signature(s).

ADJOURNMENT

Having no additional business, the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at or about 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Planning Board:

R. Gary Bechtholdt II
Town Planner

Cc: Town Clerk
/File