



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES
Tuesday, February 14, 2023



On July 16, 2022, Governor Baker signed into Law an Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, including an extension of provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2023. Accordingly, and pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to access the meeting may do so via ZOOM. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted and public participation in any public hearing conducted during this meeting shall be remote means only.

Recognizing the presence of a quorum Brian Massey, Chair called meeting to order at 7:02 PM, with the following other members in attendance: Michael Baker; James Berkowitz; Abdul Kafal; and Andrew Howden (Associate Member). Rainer Forst was absent. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner, and Barbara A. Kinney, Administrative Assistant, were also present.

Attendees of the Public: Henry Lane; Bill Renaud; Stephen O'Connell, Turning Point Engineering; Sally Paiges; Greg Smith; Maggie Roberts.

I. CITIZENS FORUM

None

II. FORM A

308 HILL STREET (RETREAT LOTS) -REVIEW/DECISION
ANR -81P Plan Assessor Map 15 Parcel 9

Steve O'Connell, on behalf owner/applicant (Jeanne Gould) explained that a Special Permit creating and allowing for two (2) Retreat Lots has been issued by the Zoning Board for the subject property, 308 Hill Street. S O'Connell explained to the Planning Board that the Special Permit (Retreat Lot) runs with the land and not the applicant; noting a different applicant (Joseph Johnson) for the Special Permit contends the permit was issued to him and not the property. S O'Connell informed the Board that the Special Permit has been recorded at the Registry and appropriate reference will be made to the ANR plan prior to endorsement. S O'Connell reviewed with the Board the ANR plan showing the creation of three (3) lots and divide the subject property (AP15-9); creating Lot 1 (remaining portion of 308 Hill Street), Lot 2 (Retreat Lot) and Lot 3 (Retreat Lot) as authorized by Zoning Board Special Permit issued for the property. The Planning Board reviewed the ANR Checklist prepared by Community Planning & Development.

Upon motion duly made (M Baker) and seconded (J Berkowitz) the Planning Board voted (4-0) TO GRANT ENDORSEMENT for the ANR Plan for 308 Hill Street; by roll call vote of M. Baker -Yes; J. Berkowitz -Yes; A. Kafal -Yes and B. Massey -Yes.

III. MBTA COMMUNITIES (SECTION 3A of MGL C. 40A -ZONING ACT) -DISCUSSION
Northbridge Action Plan, Compliance Model & Next Steps [By-Right Multi-Family Zoning]

Under the MBTA Communities Compliance Model, the requirement is 15 units per acre for multi-family units. Northbridge's Residential Five (R-5) district currently meets this requirement according to calculations

done by the Town Planner and Zoning Enforcement Officer. This action plan has been submitted to the State for confirmation/acceptance that this requirement is met under the R-5 district. If this requirement is not met under the R-5 district, G. Bechtholdt suggests that the Planning Board look to expand the R-5 district instead of rezoning other districts. G. Bechtholdt will update the Planning Board once an answer has been received. Reference is made to the memo dated February 10, 2023 from the Town Planner regarding Providence Road for additional information.

IV. PROVIDENCE ROAD TOWN-OWNED LAND (& ADJACENT PRIVATE PROPERTY) -DISCUSSION **Conceptual Development Plan -Assessor Map 14 Parcel 17 (& AP 24-21)**

The concept plan presented to the Planning Board (January 24) includes eight (8) single-family dwellings, sixty (60) duplexes and five (5) apartment buildings for a total of 394 units; 36 more units than what was described to the BOS (January 09). The conceptual layout also includes four (4) additional lots designated for business/commercial/retail use (car wash, restaurant, retail & unidentified land use). The town-owned property consists of +/-21 acres and the privately owned property consists of +/-72 acres for a total of +/-93 acres. The properties are not serviced by municipal water or sanitary sewer and have varying topography with areas of excessive slopes, steep grades, ledge, and wetland resource areas. The conceptual plan that is presented now is much more heavily residential than what was presented previously to the Planning Board and recently to the Board of Selectmen. More information is needed on the commercial component(s). If this project is built, there could be a serious influx to town services. This will need to be considered, if this project is considered for rezoning with a residential component.

A presentation was given at a previous Planning Board meeting and a meeting with multiple municipal departments was also held. These departments have been requested to provide the Planning Board with any comments they may have regarding the conceptual plan. This project may trigger additional reviews from other departments including a Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review with the State.

A MBTA Communities Zoning District for the subject property is not recommended because doing so would result in +/-90 acres being zoned for multi-family by-right which could yield a residential development of 1,350 dwelling units.

S. O'Connell stated that surplusing the town-owned land will be on the Spring Annual Town Meeting (SATM), and he wants to know if the Planning Board needs to take any action on the warrant article before the meeting. G. Bechtholdt does not think so, but will confirm this.

Reference is made to the memo dated February 10, 2023 from the Town Planner regarding Providence Road. See also discussions of MBTA Communities, Master Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, and Housing Production Plan sections of these minutes for additional information.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minutes -December 13, 2022; January 10, 2023 & January 24, 2023

Upon motion duly made (A. Kafal) and seconded (M. Baker), the Planning Board voted 4-0 by roll call vote of M. Baker – Yes; J. Berkowitz – Yes; A. Kafal – Yes and B. Massey – Yes to accept the minutes of December 13, 2022 as written.

The minutes of January 10, 2023 and January 24, 2023 were tabled.

Northbridge Master Plan (update) Initiative -MGL Chapter 41 Section 81D

The Master Plan was paused in the past due to lack of funding. The Town now has funding in place to update the Master Plan. The Housing Production Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan are parts of the Master Plan. These pieces will be concentrated on first for completion before the Master Plan update initiative is worked on. The completion of the Master Plan will take about 12 to 18 months to complete. Reference is made to the memo dated February 10, 2023 from the Town Planner regarding Providence Road.

2023-2030 Open Space & Recreation Plan (DRAFT) -Status & Next Steps

The draft for the Open Space & Recreation Plan is being completed and will be coming soon.

2023 Housing Production Plan (DRAFT) -Status & Next Steps

A meeting was held in January 2022, and it was determined that there is a need to do a Housing Production Plan (HPP). A workshop was held, surveys completed, etc. and the Housing Production Plan will be submitted soon to the town by Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). Some of the items that will be identified will be what properties will be suitable for residential development, such as the needs of the town and the locations of the properties, etc. The next step once the Housing Production Plan has been received will be to hold another public forum. The Housing Production Plan is a key component in the Master Plan. Reference is made to the memo dated February 10, 2023 from the Town Planner regarding Providence Road.

2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting (May 02, 2023)

Point of Information.

2023 SATM -Warrant Closes (March 03, 2023)

Point of Information.

Planning Board -Vote to Sponsor Warrant Article(s)

Nothing has been received yet that requires a Planning Board review/recommendation.

Mumford Riverwalk Boardwalk (Linwood Ave) -Status/Update

The Operations Project Manager (OPM) has been hired and there will be a meeting tomorrow (February 15) with them. There will be +/-400 linear feet of boardwalk constructed. The construction bid documents should be in place by the end of March with a start date at the beginning of summer and a completion date for the end of summer.

Rockdale Pocket Park (Providence Rd) -Status/Update

The Planning Office is awaiting revised plans from the architect.

Site Plan/Subdivision Developments -Status/Update

There has been no progress at Hemlock Estates. The granite curbing is being installed at The Camelot with the installation coming in from Hillcrest Road. Moon Hill Estates construction has stopped for the winter.

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Planning Board Concerns

None

Mail -Review

In addition to the mail listed (see attached), the Planning Board noted receipt of the following communications: Planning Board Agenda dated February 14, 2023; Draft Planning Board Agenda dated February 28, 2023; Citizens Forum Document; Form A Application for Endorsement of Plan Believed Not to Require Approval dated February 07, 2023 for 308 Hill Street; Division of Land of 308 Hill Street Plan dated February 07, 2023; Checklist for Approval Not Required Plan dated February 10, 2023 for 308 Hill Street; Recorded Board of Appeals Certificate of Granting Special Permit dated December 20, 2022 for 308 Hill Street; MBTA Compliance Model Information; Town of Northbridge Map showing developments under construction and potential developments; Town of Northbridge Residential Buildout dated November 2022; Plans of Northbridge Commerce Park dated January 16, 2023; Draft minutes of December 13, 2022; Chapter 41, Section 81D Master Plan document; Memo dated January 24, 2023 to all Town Departments, Committees, Boards, Commission and the Town Moderator from the Executive Assistant to the Town Manager regarding the Spring Annual Town Meeting information; Letter dated January 18, 2023 to Town Clerk from Town Planner regarding Hemlock Estates Performance Guaranty Bond Reduction; Memo dated January 05, 2023 regarding Distribution of Town's Sexual Harassment Policy; Public Hearing Notice from the Town of Grafton concerning the application of a Special Permit and Site Plan approval for a Contractor's Yard, including a new 12,000 square foot building, to be located at 18 & 22 Donahue Lane; 2023 Planning Board Meeting Dates.

Other

None

ADJOURNMENT

Having no additional business, the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of February 14, 2023 at or about 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Barbara A. Kinney
Planning Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Planning Board: _____

February 28, 2023

Cc: Town Clerk /File

February 14, 2023

Planning Board

FROM	DATE	SUBJECT

Zoning Board of Appeals

- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Earl Ebbeling for a Variance to construct a contractor's yard for storage of vehicles and equipment at the corner of Main Street and Water Street and the owner is Whitinsville Redevelopment Trust.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Earl Ebbeling for a Special Permit to construct a contractor's yard for storage of vehicles and equipment at the corner of Main Street and Water Street and the owner is Whitinsville Redevelopment Trust.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Alexander and Alexandra Vander Baan for a Variance to a dimensional variance to the existing single-family dwelling at 34 Whitin Avenue.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Matthew Flaherty for a Variance for a detached garage within the front yard setback at 256 North Main Street.

Sutton

- Public Hearing Notice (Rescheduled) – Applications of Torrington Properties for property located at 15 Pleasant Valley Road and owned by Gurbachan and Alexandria Singh for a 5,253 square foot freestanding urgent care clinic.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Joseph Danko, Jr. for a retreat lot at 143 Burbank Road (fna 141 Burbank Road).

Upton ZBA

- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Tracy Kennedy for a Special Permit for an accessory apartment at 14 North Main Street.
- Decision – Denied the Special Permit at 14 North Main Street and the applicant is Tracy Kennedy.
- Decision – Approved the Variance at 120 Elm Street and the applicant is Alice and Richard Gentili.
- Decision – Denied the Variance at 130 South Street and the applicant is Peter A. Albee.