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Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

TOWN CLERK
NORTH READING, MA

MINUTES

Tuesday, July 7, 2020

Mr. Warren Pearce, Chairperson called the Tuesday, July 7, 2020 meeting of the Community Planning Commission to order at 7:30p.m. via Virtual Meeting (Zoom, participants may call 1-301-715-8592, meeting code 9854300926.

MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Warren Pearce, Chairperson
Ryan Carroll, Clerk
Christopher Hayden
David Rudloff

STAFF

PRESENT:

Danielle McKnight, AICP
Town Planner/Community Planning Administrator
Debra Savarese, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Pearce informed all present that the meeting is being recorded.

Mr. Hayden read the Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the North Reading Community Planning Commission IS BEING CONDUCTED VIA REMOTE PARTICIPATION. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to listen to this meeting while in progress may do so by calling in 1-301-715-8592 and meeting code 9854300926.

Winter & Main Street Development - discussion

Mr. Pearce stated that the CPC has a plan for this property with great ideas, but need to have input of how to reach this potential.

Mr. George Cole of Leggat McCall Properties stated that it is great that the CPC is thinking about the development of this property and it just comes down to the question of how it will be paid for.

Mr. Pearce stated that the CPC would put together a plan and provide as much up front permitting and then expedited permitting for the rest, if possible, because permitting is a big time eater and expense to most developers.

Mr. Cole stated that in his brief conversations with Mrs. McKnight was that the CPC is looking for commercial development to build up the town's commercial tax base.

Mr. Pearce stated that's only part of it. We're looking for some mixed development and an extensive study was done with MAPC and it's clear that we need to increase our commercial development to a point, but we also need to provide some customers for that development, so housing is an intricate part of the plan.

Mr. Cole stated generally housing is both a need and a development product that would fit very well within the general facility of North Reading. It could be over 55 or senior housing, condominiums and single families, but housing is typically, in suburban communities a driver and sometimes there is enough housing to support commercial development/retail development. Retail is really going under significant challenges due to the Covid pandemic and how it comes out at the end of this pandemic is very uncertain. It's going to be very different. It's going to be a lot of entertainment/eating/experiential retail, not much of the traditional retail that were familiar with, especially new retail. People are trying to figure out office spacing, but are not optimistic about the future of the need for increased office space, even in

the suburbs. The remote working has really transformed people's ideas about how many offices are needed, the density of offices and how offices are used, so we were not bullish on offices. The few groups that seem to make sense are: healthcare, biotech lab, service and entertainment oriented retail and residential. There is a much more limited palette than even existed two years ago. He thinks what the CPC is basically looking at a development anchored by residential and complimented with some amount of retail and healthcare.

Mr. Pearce stated that one of the other facets that they have is that North Reading does not really have a really well defined town center and so, part of the project that Abacus has put together for us, is to provide a space that would become the defacto town center where events would happen or we would have the ability to hold concerts, or something like that. The actual physical town center does not have parking or good useable space.

Mr. Cole asked if it was an outdoor space, building or combination of both.

Mr. Pearce stated that it would be a combination of both.

Mr. Cole asked how the schools are. Are there any community colleges or colleges in the town?

Mr. Pearce stated that the schools are either brand new or renovated and there are no colleges.

Mr. Cole stated that schools can sometimes be used as a facet to town centers, if we had a need for new ones.

Mr. Pearce stated that they are kind of constrained as to what they can do and the MAPC study that was done was pretty clear about what they thought we needed to do. He believes that they are basing a lot of their templates from other towns that are geographically set up a little better than North Reading. Both Reading and Andover's town centers are on Rte. 28, and we just have two miles of a little bit of everything and no real defined center. So, picking a location and not having many locations that are developable.

Mr. Cole stated that he was told that the land that the CPC is looking at is all privately owned and what is their thought on that.

Mr. Pearce stated that they have some interest from some of the landowners to get involved with this and one of them has a particular interest.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they have reached out to each of them over the years to talk about the possibility of having the town come up with some kind of plan with their input and would facilitate what would ultimately be a private development and some of them have been more

interested than others. She thinks some of them are interested to see what the town comes up with. They aren't necessarily excited to do a lot of the work on their own until there is sewer line running down Main Street. At that point she believes that a lot more owners would be motivated to try to plan and invest in their properties. We have tried to figure out what might incentivize these people to invest in their properties and do something along the lines that they have been talking about. If we could come up with some type of sewerage solution which is where the idea for the shared package treatment plant comes in. Our idea was if the town could figure out how that might work and what the resulting development would look like, if that were to happen and we were hoping that that might be enough of a scenario where we would be able to get the other property owners interested in participating in something like that and paying for it because we don't have town funds to develop it. We hope to have municipal sewer within the next several years and this could be a catalyst for development.

Mr. Cole stated that what he thinks the CPC really wants to do is spend as little of the town's money, essentially to prime that pump. That is to get to get private money interested in spending money on development. The question here is how to spend as little public funds as possible to encourage that private development. In their experience it's a combination of leveraged infrastructure, that is putting in a sewer, or at least putting in the promise of a sewer if certain things happen and secondly up-zoning. Allowing much more development than is currently allowed on their site which by definition almost increases the value of the property.

Mr. Pearce stated that it is possible to get some zoning changes done. Because we have a limited amount of commercial that is the only pushback they might get if they think that we are giving up commercial for residential.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they did rezone this area a few years ago to allow multi-family development, as a component of a mixed-use development and it originally included the Stop & Shop property because we had this project in mind, but it was not supported enough and had to remove that property from the rezoning effort. She thinks they would like to try doing that again, but the concern was that property is so huge and so much bigger than any of the other properties, how much housing might we end up with.

Mr. Cole stated that people really don't want to see change and that's what you as planning leaders in the town need to think about in the process.

Mr. Rich Wallner stated that he thinks throughout all the studies that the CPC has done so far, we have elevated this discussion and we have consistently received feedback as people consistently saying that they want to see this happen and they recognize the need for it. So, he's a little more optimistic about the town's support of it. He can't say that everyone in town knows about it, but one of those surveys that received six hundred respondents and the parts of the survey that received the most support had to do with creating this area. He believes that

that they didn't want to change the zoning prematurely because we didn't want to drive up the cost of the property if for some reason we ended up in an eminent domain situation.

Mr. Pearce stated that he believes that Mrs. McKnight is correct when saying that the people want us to show them something. There might be a better consensus out there than we realize.

Mr. Cole stated that people really do get their heads around pictures. You don't want to show them pictures that you can't deliver on. Very early schematics and conceptual drawings like Abacus has done is a pretty useful sales tool, as long as you give them a disclaimer that this is just a very preliminary look.

Mr. Pearce stated that they are doing as much research as they can, but they needed some input.

Mr. Carroll stated that Mr. Cole mentioned bringing to the table for developers the development plan which obviously has some financially modelling to go along with the conceptual site plan. How do towns go about pulling those resources together? He anticipates a developer sees an opportunity and do that stuff on their end, under their own impetus.

Mr. Cole stated that it really depends and since you don't have site control, much more typically were doing this kind of exercise that is owned by an institution, a state agency, or a town. You don't own this, so it's very hard to say if you're selected or make it into the final round, this could be a project you'll do, and we don't know that. It's really going to be the result of a negotiation between a developer and a private property owner. What you could do is put together a package that showed potential development that the town could live with and bring in a series of developers under an RFQ process to give their qualifications and introduce it in such a way that your essentially setting up marriages between the developers and property owners and giving them some sort of public incentives, such as the ability to tie into a sewer system, if they make the deal. He believes that the CPC would have to take on the role as mediators between the property owners and the developers with the incentive that they will be able to tie into something that the town can give them.

Mr. Pearce stated that most of them realize that the big block to any kind of development is sewer and he thinks if they realize that there is a pipe in the street, or one right next to their property that they could hook up to, the sky's the limit to what they can do with their property.

Mr. Cole stated that to the developer whose getting in early could say that the property is currently worth 5 million and if we hook it up to sewer and increased zoning density from the town it's going to be worth 15 million.

Mr. Pearce asked what would be the mechanism that they would use to bring twelve property owners into a situation where we just have to buy every property and develop it, or get permission to develop or funding, or everybody is part of the corporation.

Mr. Cole stated that he is unsure, but the town's role is to provide an incentive to the developer and the property owner to do the deal. The key that you have is access to infrastructure, sewer water and zoning density. So you would set up a process by which you encourage property owners and developers to talk to each other and you don't do any deal that doesn't conform to your Master plan. If it does conform to your Master plan they get access to zoning density and sewer. This way you're not out of pocket for property.

Mrs. McKnight stated that in terms of incentives like that, do you think there is much of an incentive to talk about shared package treatment plant that the developers are paying for, or do we have to wait until we have actual sewer hookup.

Mr. Cole stated that it depends how much density and certainty that you are offering them.

Mr. Rudloff stated that the next step with Abacus will be getting our top scenarios/plans that they presented to us (approximately 10) refined. Is that enough to bring to developers or should we be trying to fine-tune even more because the developers do a lot of this work on their own.

Mr. Cole stated that it is too premature to go to developers, just yet. To the land owners and town people, sure.

Mrs. McKnight stated that Abacus has brought up having a meeting with property owners as the next phase of this.

Minutes

Mr. Carroll moved, seconded by Mr. Hayden and voted 4-0: (Mr. Bellavance absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to approve the minutes of May 12, 2020, as amended.

Mr. Carroll moved, seconded by Mr. Hayden and voted 4-0: (Mr. Bellavance absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to approve the minutes of May 19, 2020 as written.

Zoning Board of Appeals

1 Acorn Knoll Drive – On the petition of Kris Mazzarisi for a home occupation special permit for an online retail store business.

The Community Planning Commission has reviewed the above-referenced application and has the following comments:

- The CPC encourages considering any impacts to abutters of the business.
- The applicant should fully adhere to the Home Occupation zoning bylaw (§200-42)

35 Anthony Road – On the petition of Scott McDaniel for a home occupation special permit for a light construction business.

The Community Planning Commission has reviewed the above-referenced application and has the following comments:

- The CPC recommends full adherence to the Home Occupation zoning bylaw (§200-42), including limitations on commercial vehicles allowed on the premises.

7 Mentus Farm Lane – On the petition of Michelle & George O'Connor for a special permit to raise chickens.

The Community Planning Commission has reviewed the above-referenced application and has the following comments:

- The CPC recommends considering any impacts to neighbors that may be caused by the proposal.
- The CPC does not object provided the appropriate bylaws are adhered to.

52 North Street – On the petition of Jaclyn Tomlinson for a variance from the side yard setback to attach the existing garage to their house.

The Community Planning Commission has reviewed the above-referenced application and has the following comments:

- The CPC notes that the side setback relief requested is significant.
- The CPC recommends verifying that the intent of the new space is not to create a new dwelling unit.

68 Northridge – On the petition of Mary (Molly) Howard for a home occupation special permit for an online business selling camping equipment.

The Community Planning Commission has reviewed the above-referenced application and has the following comments:

- The CPC encourages consideration of any impacts the proposal will have on abutters, should there be any disturbances associated with the home occupation.
- The applicant should fully adhere to the Home Occupation zoning bylaw (§200-42).

6 Shirley Avenue – On the petition of Mathew McDonald for a home occupation special permit for a home office for his electrical business.

The Community Planning Commission has reviewed the above-referenced application and has the following comments:

- The CPC encourages asking how large the garage is.
- The applicant should fully adhere to the Home Occupation zoning bylaw (§200-42).

6 Stewart Road – On the petition of Kaleigh Daigle for a home occupation special permit for a childbirth education and Doula services business.

The Community Planning Commission has reviewed the above-referenced application and has the following comments:

- The CPC encourages considering any impacts to abutters of the business.
- The applicant should fully adhere to the Home Occupation zoning bylaw (§200-42).

55 Concord Street – On the petition of Sergio Coviello for a special permit to install a driveway across the front of the building which will allow for additional parking spaces. The applicant is requesting a variance from the front setback.

The Community Planning Commission has reviewed the above-referenced application and has the following comments:

- As this was originally a site plan approved by the ZBA, the CPC defers to the ZBA's opinion regarding the proposed changes.

Planning Administrator Updates**Seven Acres Poultry Farm**

The Select Board is holding a Special Town meeting for the property located on Concord Street 8/8/2020.

E- Permitting

The CPC is now on line with the permitting (applications and review).

Concord Street and Fordham Road

The construction is underway at the intersection of Concord and Fordham.

Open Space Plan

The Open Space Plan has been finalized and we are eligible for grant funds.

Carpenter Drive

Carpenter Drive will be added to the October Town meeting.

CPC meetings – in-person

The Town Administrator is willing to discuss this with the CPC if we feel we have a need; there are factors to consider and requirements to be met.

Adjournment at 9:00PM

Respectfully submitted,



Ryan Carroll, Clerk