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Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

TOWN CLERK
NORTH READING, MA

MINUTES

Tuesday, October 10, 2017

Mr. William Bellavance, Chairperson called the Tuesday, October 10, 2017 meeting of the Community Planning Commission to order at 7:30p.m. in Room 14 of the North Reading Town Hall, 235 North Street, North Reading, MA.

MEMBERS

PRESENT: William Bellavance, Chairperson
Warren Pearce, Vice Chairperson
Jonathan Cody, Clerk
Joseph Veno

STAFF

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

Mr. Bellavance informed all present that the meeting was being recorded.

Minutes

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

that the Community Planning Commission vote to accept the September 19, 2017 minutes as amended.

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

that the Community Planning Commission vote to accept the October 2, 2017 minutes as amended.

Nichols Street Ext. – endorse plans

Mr. Pearce moved, seconded by Mr. Veno and voted 3-0: (Mr. Hayden absent and Mr. Cody recused)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to endorse the plans entitled “Nichols Street Extension, North Reading, Massachusetts”; dated March 20, 2017; last revised July 31, 2017; drawn by LJR Engineering, Inc. Subject to the terms and conditions of the Certificate of Conditional Approval dated August 17, 2017.

Mid Iron Drive – bond release

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

that the Community Planning vote to accept the September 28, 2017 correspondence from Town Engineer, Mike Soraghan and that the amount of \$1,500.00 be released for the completion of as-built plan for 2 Mid Iron Drive. (No previous bond amount)

Housing Survey

Mr. Bellavance stated that the survey was too wordy.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it's about half the length that it was. She thinks that it needs to be simpler, with less jargon. This is the next step to the housing production plan. They've had the first community forum, then this survey and then another forum. She has been working with our consultant, on the survey, and she wanted to get the opinion of the board.

Mr. Bellavance stated that if surveys get too wordy, people will answer the first few questions, but will become less interested towards the end of the survey and do whatever to complete it.

Mrs. McKnight stated that maybe some of this information doesn't have to be put on the survey, but could be brought to a community meeting.

Mr. Pearce stated that a survey can be controlled by what questions are being asked, what is offered as answers, or should they be offered any answers at all.

Mrs. McKnight stated that these answers were added because they were mentioned at the first meeting. There was not a very large group that attended that meeting, so she thinks that the survey will reach more people, and maybe these people will have other ideas and maybe that's one question that should be totally open, this would allow them not to be pushed along by any suggestions. She will make this change and also eliminate the introduction, but will provide a link if the people want more information.

Mr. Bellavance asked what type of feedback other towns have gotten back from these surveys.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she believes that others have had success in doing this, but she has looked at surveys that other towns and found them to be much simpler.

Mr. Cody stated that the survey could start off with the easier questions.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it could start with the demographics and maybe a few more questions, but also let the people know that there is going to be a public meeting that they can attend.

Mr. Bellavance stated that the survey should be quick and to the point.

Mr. Veno stated that it is a good survey, but some people are not going to understand all of the questions.

Mr. Cody stated that the survey has a question in regard to multi-family housing and he thinks that people are going to mistake this for two or three family homes, not a condo/apartment complex.

Mr. Cody stated that he likes the idea of adding in-law apartments. There is not a lot of affordable housing in this town and people want to down-size.

Mr. Pearce stated that California offered a program for add-on apartments that could be rented and it went over like a lead balloon.

Wastewater/Sewer RFP - discussion

Mrs. McKnight stated that the RFP is with the Town Administrator for review. In the meantime, the State has advertised another grant program for "Sustainable Planning Initiatives". One of the things that a town could qualify to do, is a project looking at how a wastewater package plants could allow for development in areas where they are trying to get more development. This is currently what we are doing, so she wanted to know what the board would like to do:

- 1) Ask for the grant to be used for something totally different.
- 2) Leverage the funds that the town already has, since we need a required 25% match and expand the project a little bit to see they could look at the other side of the street
- 3) Ask for additional money to make this a more robust project. If they do this it would delay the project because the grant is due on October 23rd and they would have to wait for a response.

Mr. Pearce stated that he does not think that they need to worry about timeframes because he doesn't think that this is something that is going to happen too quickly. His big concern is that the properties that they are talking about are a lot of small pieces, other than 197 Main Street (Stop & Shop) and 66 Winter Street (Heffron Asphalt) are not big enough to sustain a package treatment plant and put any kind of meaningful development on it. His concept of going to that already approved DPW site and putting the package treatment plant there and running the pipe will get the town involved, will get those properties moving. If they can get the grant and augment the funds that they have, they can put together a more concrete plan which may incite a developer.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he has been calling people, but the only one to call back is RK Centers, owner of 72 Main Street. They are looking at the possibility of doing a package treatment plant. One thought that comes to mind is if businesses were asked to contribute to the town sewer, they would do it. He would like to speak to someone from Federal Realty, owner of 271 Main Street. He has also attended the Board of Selectmen meetings and when they speak about strategic planning, sewer always comes up.

Mr. Pearce stated that the town took a piece of land from New England Power, located behind 72 Main Street property. This is a piece of land where the town could site this whole project on, except for the leach field. However, it's close enough to the leach field behind the post office property, 76 Main Street, where the town could probably get access, and if, the town creates a quality product it could probably quadruple the leach field capacity.

Mr. Bellavance asked what specifically is the RFP asking for?

Mrs. McKnight stated that it's basically asking for the following: 1) A feasibility study to look at permitting requirements, costs and physically whether it could be done, to actually connect a number of properties into a shared wastewater package treatment plant. 2) A couple of concept plans to show what a development might look like if this were done.

Mr. Bellavance stated that it could show what the potential growth and taxes would be.

Mr. Pearce stated that the town's people seem to think that if the town goes for the sewer it's going to cost millions of dollars and it's not.

Mr. Bellavance stated that it doesn't have to start with the selectmen. It could start here and then be brought to the selectmen.

Mr. Pearce stated that Rich Wallner of 57 Lakeside Blvd. was very correct in a lot of the stuff that he brought to the board on September 19th. If he can get a consortium with a huge consensus that this is the thing to do, maybe he can move the selectmen to put this on the warrant. He knows all about this and has dealt with it before. Therefore he is having a hard time seeing which piece of property could be given up to support the rest of them.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he is not looking at it in that way. He is looking at it as a study that can be utilized throughout Rte. 28.

Mr. Pearce stated that this RFP was focused on one area.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it was, but the funding that they got was for a package plant, not for permanent sewer.

Mr. Cody stated that property owners should get involved with this to show the selectmen that they are interested.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she called all of the property owners who owned a piece of property in the area of Winter Street and Main Street. Some called back and some didn't. Most of them gave the answer that they would like to see what comes from the study, and some might be interested in contributing if it looks like it would work. She would like to know if the board still feels that it's still worthwhile to do the original study that they got the money, specifically to do at town meeting. They could add a little to it and work within the warrant article, but they can't really change it.

Mr. Bellavance stated that its going to be some good information.

Mr. Pearce stated if we do a feasibility study and they come back and say well, to do it, you're going to have to give up one of these properties and we don't think that that's going to happen, so the feasibility is a no. So, we spend some money to get a clear no, when we kind of expected this. Or it's going to be if we include the Stop & Shop property.

Mr. Bellavance stated on that specific idea, but it's still good information to know.

Mrs. McKnight state that they still need to know this because you need to go to the property owners with some concrete information about what would work and what won't.

Mr. Pearce stated that before they put out the RFP, they need to get it all done and meet with the Board of Selectmen to ask them if we get positive feedback will they allow the town some kind of support to make this happen.

Mrs. McKnight stated that none of the infrastructure would be publicly funded. This was all presented as a feasibility analysis to look at private investment.

Mr. Pearce stated that he was thinking more along the lines of permitting.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it might depend on the results of the study.

Dan Mills of 5 Green Meadow Drive stated that he has not seen the RFP, but is it saying if you have a package treatment plant, that you're going to be able to develop this property to look like x.

Mr. Pearce stated yes.

Dan Mills asked so, why limit it to a package treatment plant or a sewer treatment plant down Main Street.

Mr. Bellavance stated that the RFP only allows a package treatment plant.

Mr. Pearce stated with Kitty's Restaurant right next door and they would love to hook up.

Dan Mills asked 1) why a land owner would even consider spending a half million dollars if they think five years down the line there might be sewer. 2) if you want to show what type of development along the corridor, you can have package treatment plant, consolidate some parcels, or have a sewer line down Main Street. What could a development property (scenario) look like?

Mr. Pearce stated that a group did a study in 2006, based on suiting Main Street and what the tax advantage would be. It was a bit inconclusive, but it did produce some results.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the company FXM did the study. She spoke to someone from FXM a couple of years ago because there had been some inquiries about maybe getting some of the updates for numbers from Concord Street which he had also done and he said that he couldn't believe that the town had not initiated the sewer system, FXM had thought it was so obvious that it would have been a financial benefit.

Mr. Bellavance asked why it wasn't done.

Mr. Pearce stated that they did the work and brought it to the selectmen who thought it was a great idea, but said the town needed a new school. That's why it didn't happen.

Mr. Bellavance stated that there is a different mindset in the town now.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they are advancing the draft EIR and FEIR, and that's supposed to get us the answers to the questions for what we are allowed to permit. There is feedback from the DEP on a number of aspects of the different things that have been considered.

Mr. Bellavance stated that maybe if we sit and wait for this grant, it will give us a little more time of what the ultimate plan vision.

Mr. Pearce stated that he thinks that this board needs to be the one to start this and bring it to the selectmen, and get an answer.

Mr. Bellavance stated that there is so much up in the air right now that the selectmen are not going to make a decision on the water until April. Everything depends on the water.

Mr. Pearce asked if they go ahead and apply for the grant and use it as an add-on and use it as a reason for not going any further with the package treatment plant.

Mrs. McKnight asked what happens if we get the grant and decide by that point that the project doesn't fit. It wouldn't look good to get the grant and not to take it and not do the project. They don't want to waste the funds if the project isn't worthwhile.

Mr. Pearce stated that he agrees it would not be a good idea to spend the money and not do the project.

Mr. Bellavance stated that they are not going to make a quick decision.

Mr. Pearce stated that he doesn't care if they make a quick decision, as long as they make the right decision.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she doesn't think the B.O.S. is going to make a decision on sewer until they decide about the water.

Mr. Pearce stated that he doesn't think so either, but they need to know that this is something that has been worked on for the past 20 years and it's time to make a decision. He spoke to Mark Clark from the water department and he told him that they are going to abandon the wells because water that they get from either one is ready to go. Because they will not be taking any more water out of the ground and all of these outlying lands with septic systems are putting water back into the ground, should satisfy the DEP.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he would speak to Mr. Prisco, B.O.S. tomorrow about this, so this board can be informed.

Signage Bylaw - discussion

Mrs. McKnight stated at the last meeting they looked at signage bylaws from other towns and pulled out some attributes of those bylaws that might be worth changing in ours. She took a first pass at going through our bylaw adding and putting comments in certain areas where they talked about. One of the things that keep popping up is the Gilbert decision from the Supreme Court from last year. This is one of the reasons that they should include Kopelman & Paige early on. Interestingly, it used to be fine to say that you could regulate political and commercial signs differently, but it's not now, so they are going to need to rely on K&P for that. They will have to regulate less in that direction but it is still total fine to regulate aesthetics, lighting, size, colors and anything else that they see fit as far as the way the sign looks, just not the content specific regulations.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he is concerned with the size of signs. In a residential district every sign proposal should come to this board for a permit.

Mr. Pearce asked if this would include "For Sale" signs.

Mr. Cody stated that any window form of advertising should be less than 25%.

Mr. Pearce stated that the reason commercial buildings have large windows is to put the advertising. Deciding what they don't want may be a better way to go with these changes.

Mr. Veno stated that he is undecided at this time.

Mr. Bellavance asked the board if they had reviewed the changes made by Mrs. McKnight, if not, he suggested that they do that because she has captured a lot of what they have been talking about.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they can put in the changes that they would like to see happen and then have K&P review to see if they are meeting all of the requirements.

Mr. Bellavance stated that Mrs. McKnight will take pictures of the signs in town and he would like the board members to take pictures of signs that they prefer. These should be presented at the next meeting.

Planning Administrator

The Greens

Mrs. McKnight stated that there was a fire at The Greens/Unit 1. This unit was zoned as commercial and should not have been used for residential use, according to the special permit, but it was. The owner of the unit would like to change this unit to residential, but this will require a change to the P.U.D. Should this be a minor or a major modification?

Mr. Pearce stated that a plan should be submitted for review.

Mr. Bellavance stated that it can be put on the agenda as a minor modification.

318 Haverhill Street

The developer for this property has put binder down, but only within the cul-de-sac street layout. The rest of the way is was not done, and right now the developer says the ground is too soft to pave. He would like to finish the binder after they put in the foundations for the houses.

The consensus of the board is that this is a safety concern and the driveways need to have binder down before a foundation permit is issued.

47 & 51 Oakdale Road – Determination of Access

Mrs. McKnight stated that a developer came into the office stating that he would like to construct a home. She checked the file and could not find a decision in regard to this determination. The minutes do state the board approved this and she wanted to check with the board to be sure that this was accurate.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it does show on the as-built plan that the road was completed, but she will go out to check it.

Mr. Pearce stated that he remembered this application, but wanted to know if the lot was shown on the ANR.

Mrs. McKnight stated that based on the ANR that was approved it looks as though the creation of the lot was approved. She can advise the developer that as long as the roadway was approved they don't need anything else from us.

Adjournment at 10:30PM

Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan Cody, Clerk