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Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

TOWN CLERK
NORTH READING, MA

MINUTES

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Mr. William Bellavance, Chairperson called the Tuesday, March 20, 2018 meeting of the Community Planning Commission to order at 7:07p.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
Christopher Hayden

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.

Housing Production Plan - discussion

Karen Sunnarborg, Consultant for the town presented a powerpoint. (see attached).

Mr. Pearce asked if the State would negotiate with the owners to keep the affordable homes/apartments that are expiring.

Karen Sunnarborg stated that it would involve the developer, town, special organizations and the State.

Mr. Cody asked if the State could negotiate by lowering the rate of the loan to make it functional to keep.

Karen Sunnarborg stated yes, there would be ways to work with the lenders to make it more affordable.

Mr. Pearce stated that they would probably want to look at how to negotiate before the expiration of the 40R at Edgewood.

Karen Sunnarborg stated that any new affordable units that are produced make sure that all the terms and conditions involved, are kept in perpetuity.

Mrs. McKnight stated that this is actually an issue that has come up in the Housing Services office and they're aware that this is something that the town wants them to help with.

Mr. Bellavance asked if the town has ever looked at providing a tax incentive to Edgewood.

Mr. Pearce stated that he doesn't think a tax incentive would be a good idea. He would rather see the State put pressure on them to keep the affordable units.

Mr. Cody asked why these units are not in perpetuity. Is it the way it was voted on or is it the rules of the State.

Karen Sunnarborg stated that certain programs have certain terms of affordability and its generally hoped that when the terms expire they will be extended, but years ago, the terms were much narrower, so there is greater awareness that we need to be pushing for longer terms. It has to do with how a project was financed; certain program subsidies have a program.

Minutes

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

that the Community Planning Commission vote to approve the minutes of March 5, 2018 as written.

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

that the Community Planning Commission vote to approve the minutes of March 6, 2018 as written.

20 Main Street/Signage – P.H. 8:00PM

Mr. Gary McCoy of Poyant Signs stated that he is a bit confused as to why he needed to come to the board this evening. He's working on two projects for this property and his understanding is that he is only looking for relief from the proposed CVS free-standing sign because the zoning bylaw allows 40 sq. ft., but this board can allow up to 50 sq. ft. They were asked to do as a courtesy, but not necessary, is a comprehensive sign plan which is what they've submitted of the remodeled shopping center. They're taking down the existing signs and just putting them back up, so they can redo the façade. They're also re-facing Eastgate Liquors which is currently CVS pharmacy because CVS is moving into a new building.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he doesn't like internally lit signs and he was hoping to see something change with that. He has seen CVS signs that are externally lit and they look great. He also thinks that externally lit signs would go better with the proposed façade.

Mr. McCoy stated that you will find other CVS and other chains with internally and externally lit signs are generally driven by the jurisdiction or regulations of the town. The internally lit request falls within the North Reading bylaws.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he was very clear at the last meeting of what this board would prefer for signage. His hope was with this Master Signage program that with such an investment to the façade it would also include the externally lighting.

Mr. Hayden stated that these internally lit signs are the worst when it comes to light pollution. Exterior lit signs can be very attractive and still bring in the customers. He also does not believe that CVS needs a sign because it is a draw for this town. These are massive signs which violate the bylaws and he doesn't see any real change to the plans. The building permit that was submitted was only for a portion of the site and it should have been for the whole site.

Mr. McCoy stated that they are not making any changes to the other portion of the site.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the building inspector had explained to her the elements of the proposal that would need relief. One of them is the request of increase in total area and the other is having two free-standing signs. If it was just the one free-standing sign and it's a grandfathered sign, no relief would be required. The fact that they are proposing to have two free-standing signs, both of which are on Main Street rather than one on Main Street and one on Park Street that is another element that would require relief. The only way to really achieve this is through the Signage Master Permit Plan process.

Mr. Cody asked if the owner would be opposed to do externally lit signs.

Mr. McCoy stated that they would absolutely be opposed. They're making a substantial investment to this property. In regard to the light pollution he can bring in studies showing that indirect lighting actually produces more light than self-contained letter. These lights are contained within the letter and they match everything that is there.

Mr. Cody stated that it's this board's job to clean up Main Street.

Mr. McCoy referenced the Planners letter dated January 3, 2018. It doesn't mention anything about two pylons. It says while the Master Plan while is optional, the application appears to be a Master Plan application that was put together as a courtesy. So, based on this document the only thing that says anything significant or concrete changes or problems was the size of the pylon sign. Although it does say that the board would prefer to see non-lit signage. The letter is pretty vague as far as specifics of what the board would like to see.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he understands that Mr. McCoy is unaware of what the board preferred for the signage there was a lengthy discussion at the last meeting.

Mr. Cody stated that technically they are only reviewing the new sign and they are not going with internally lit signs. We need to work with him and see what changes they can make other than the lighting.

Mr. Hayden stated that they have not seen a building permit and for all they know this drawing is all they may get. We are not approving the façade of the building.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they are approving the signage and façade.

Mr. McCoy stated that they are showing the current signs going back up, but in reality a lot of them are probably going to change, except for the size.

Mr. Hayden stated that a lot of what they are seeing is 50 years old and there is better technology for lighting.

Mr. Bellavance asked if there is any potential of when signs get replaced of going with a specific design because that's the idea behind a Master Signage Plan is to have some uniformity throughout the whole site and right now it's not.

Mr. McCoy stated that he cannot commit to this, but the tenant may want to change the signage to conform more to the new façade.

Mr. Pearce stated that they will probably replace the older signage.

Mr. McCoy stated that he is surprised by the reaction of the board because he thought he was following the contents of the bylaw and Planning Department's letter.

Mr. Pearce asked if CVS was only privy to the new sign or could some of the other tenant's signs be transferred from the existing sign.

Mr. McCoy stated that he is not privy to the lease agreement.

Mr. Cody stated that it would be nice to see the two signs at the same level. So a condition should be added that if a tenant cabinet sign needs to be replaced it should conform.

Mr. Hayden stated that his preference is that lighting of the letters be lit, not the background.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he agrees that any new lighting should conform.

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

that the Community Planning Commission vote to approve the plan for signage and facade improvements entitled "CVS pharmacy, Store #1143, 24 Main Street, North Reading, MA"; dated 6/28/2016; revised 2/22/2018; drawn by Poyant Signs. Subject to the following conditions: 1) That upon removal of the signage and any subsequent new signage that is put up will be placed on a common center line, of the sign band, on the building. 2) An 8' x 6½' x 5' 10 ½ 'cabinet with an overall height of 20' pole be constructed 16' from Main Street.

9 Cottage Street – minor modification

Mrs. McKnight stated that she received a routing slip to sign off on the building permit for 9 Cottage Street. The Determination of Access plan that was presented and approved showed widening of the roadway and additional gravel, but not paving, although it was discussed at the meeting. The decision has a condition that states that the roadwork has to be done before a building permit is issued. Mr. Smith asked her to sign off on the routing slip which she has not done because the roadwork has not been completed. Mr. Smith has stated that he is going to pave the roadway. It was discussed at the meeting, but not required. She told Mr. Smith if the board wants to change the parameters of this plan, whether it be to change the requirement of the roadwork being done or pave the road the board would need to make the modification.

Mr. Smith stated that he would like to start work on the house before paving the road because he doesn't want it to be damaged. He would like to have the decision changed to not receiving the occupancy permit until the road is completed.

Mr. Hayden asked if the construction would be completed this year.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he wants to be sure that this is completed by September.

Mr. Smith stated that it should be completed, if there are any issues that arise and he cannot complete it by September he will inform the Planning Department

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

that the Community Planning Commission vote to revise condition # 2 of the Conditional Approval dated 11/14/2017 to "that the road work, including paving of Cottage Street will be completed no later than September 15, 2018." See Town Engineer memo, dated 3/20/2018, regarding paving requirements)

Adjournment at 9:15PM

Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan Cody, Clerk