

**April 2, 2024
Planning Board**

Present were: Regular Members: Chair Lori Langlois, Vice-Chair Tom McCue, Henry Noel, Larry Laflamme, Dan Whittet; **Ex-Officio Members:** Paul Grenier and Lise Barrette; **Alternate Members:** Jeffrey Quackenbush, Eamon Kelley and Cassandra Mason.

Excused were Regular Members: Karen Collins and Micah Bachner

Others Present Pamela Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives; Christina Lefebvre, York Land Services, LLC

Chair Lori Langlois called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Ms. Langlois appointed Jeffrey Quackenbush, Cassandra Mason and Eamon Kelley as voting members for the meeting.

Public Comments

None

Approval March 5, 2024 Minutes

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2024 meetings as submitted. Ms. Mason seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried. Mr. Grenier abstained because he was not a member of the Board at the time.

Ms. Laflamme introduced Councilor Paul Grenier as our new Ex-Officio Planning Board Member.

Minor Subdivision – Countryside Development Co. Tax Map 117 Lot 40, 350 Glen Avenue

Ms. Christina Lefebvre shared the plan with the members of the board. There are two buildings on this lot, the Seventh Street Graphics building and the plaza with multiple businesses. This lot cannot be split evenly and this subdivision has been brought to the Zoning Board for a variance because of the setbacks. Each parcel will have an easement between the buildings for access to the propane tanks. By dividing this lot and separating the buildings it will make it easier to obtain financing.

Mr. Quackenbush asked why it stated the road as Old Glen Avenue. Ms. Laflamme said that this old road, which still exists, provides parking area for all those properties. The property boundary lines will need to be fixed sometime in the future.

Mr. Grenier asked to clarify that the land behind the buildings was undevelopable land.

Mr. McCue made a motion to accept the application as complete. Mr. Grenier seconded it.

Further discussion: Mr. Quackenbush asked if this will cause any future issues like installing fencing. Ms. Laflamme said it will not, they are allowed to put a fence right up to the property line and we advise that they make sure it's on their property.

All in favor, the motion carried.

Ms. Langlois recessed the meeting and opened the Public Meeting at 6:38pm. There were no public comments. Ms. Langlois closed the Public Meeting and resumed the Planning Board meeting at 6:38pm.

Ms. Langlois asked if the two buildings were physically connected. No, they are not, there is six feet between the buildings.

Mr. McCue made a motion to accept the subdivision plan as presented. Mr. Grenier seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

Board Members discussed the following Findings of Fact:

- The minimum subdivision standard is met by way of the Zoning Board's decision to grant a variance
- The Business General zoning is appropriate because there are two separate commercial buildings
- The owner is willing to separate the two buildings into two separate parcels
- It's a benefit to the community in that it increases the value by separating into two lots which will potentially increase the taxes collected

Mr. Quackenbush made a motion to accept the Findings of Fact. Mr. Grenier seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

Housing Opportunity Grant- Updates

Ms. Laflamme shared the hard copies of the survey which is 11 pages because of the selections throughout the survey. This makes it appear to be much longer than it is. The hard copies will be shared in the City Hall lobby, the Library and other agencies throughout the City. The online survey will be available tomorrow and will be accessible for three to four weeks.

She also shared the flyer for the upcoming Community Forum on May 1st at the Service Credit Union Heritage Park. The flyer has QR code on it for easy registration. It will be shared all over the City and will also be printed in the newspaper. Barrett Consulting will be asking for feedback on the recommendations they have been made so far.

Ms. Laflamme says that we should have the final recommendations from Barrett Consulting at the June meeting. There may also be some additional funds available which we can then use to do a complete re-write of the ordinance.

Mr. Whittet asked how many surveys are expected by the Community Forum. Ms. Laflamme thinks it could be anywhere from 400 to 800 surveys.

There was further discussion concerning the process of the recommendations and the drafting of new sections of the ordinance and whether they would be form-based codes. The process will involve the approval of the City Council.

Ms. Laflamme is asking that the board members make an effort to attend this event.

Lot Merger, Ryan & Valerie Christopher, Map 130 Lots 129 & 130

Ryan and Valerie Christopher, of 567 Cheshire Street, are asking to merge their two lots which are adjacent. One is their house lot and the other is vacant. Mr. Grenier brought up discussion about the community benefits and the whether the vacant lot is a buildable lot.

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the merger for Map 130 Lots 129 and 130. Mr. Whittet seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

Board Members discussed the following Findings of Fact:

- Both lots are adjacent
- Both lots are in common ownership
- This is a simple merger requested by the owner

Mr. Grenier made a motion to accept the Findings of Fact. Mr. Laflamme seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

Lot Merger, Tyler Martin, Map 123 Lots 3 & 4

Mr. Martin is asking to merge these two vacant lots on Grandview Drive because where he wants to site his new house would make the house straddle both lots. There was some discussion about the existing easement on one of the lots.

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the merger for Map 123 Lots 3 and 4. Mr. Grenier seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

Board Members discussed the following Findings of Fact:

- Both lots are adjacent
- Both lots are in common ownership
- This is a simple merger requested by the owner

Mr. Grenier made a motion to accept the Findings of Fact. Mr. McCue seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

Other

Ms. Laflamme shared that at the last council meeting, Tom McCue, Dan Whittet and Jeffrey Quackenbush were all re-appointed in their current positions on the Planning Board. Mr. Grenier has been appointed an Ex-Officio Member. It is also time for the Planning Board to vote for a new Chair and Vice Chair. Ms. Langlois would like to step down from the Chair position and Mr. McCue has expressed his interest.

Mr. Laflamme made a motion to nominated Mr. McCue to be the Chair. Ms. Langlois seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. McCue made a motion to nominate Ms. Langlois to be the Vice Chair. Mr. Grenier seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. Quackenbush asked about whether the members of the Energy Committee will be able to remain on the Planning Board in the future. Ms. Laflamme said she will be looking into this with the City Attorney.

Public Comments

None

Member Comments

Mr. Laflamme asked how it would affect the City if the State made a decision concerning zoning and housing. Ms. Laflamme explained we would have to make the changes accordingly and it would have to be approved by the City Council also. Mr. McCue said the State would possibly make it an option to opt-in to any zoning changes by community.

Mr. Whittet asked about other sections of the ordinance that don't involve housing but involve something like signage. Ms. Laflamme said that she hopes that the new funding will potentially allow us to have the whole ordinance re-written which would include those sections. Mr. Grenier asked if CDBG would possibly do this project. Ms. Laflamme said she wasn't sure at this time.

Mr. Noel brought up some discussion about the State not opting to change the Energy Codes and whether the City can still do so. It is believed the City can.

Mr. Whittet talked about the recent Climate Action presentation. The NH DES have a potential for funds in the future and it's something the City may want to look into. Ms. Laflamme will keep an eye out for it.

Mr. McCue mentioned that registration is open for the NH Office of Planning and Development's Spring 2024 Conference. It will be held on Saturday, May 11th and will be virtual. Sessions will be recorded and will be available afterwards also.

Mr. McCue said that he is currently one of the City representatives for the North Country Council. He is going to be stepping down from this position. There was discussion about what the North Country Council does and how they've helped Berlin in the past. The council meets quarterly. Mr. Whittet expressed his interest in serving in this position. The City Council will need to make the nomination.

Project Updates

None

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the board, Mr. Kelley made a motion to adjourn. Mr. McCue seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

The Planning Board meeting ended at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted by Lise Barrette