

PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH, New Hampshire

Minutes of September 21, 2015

Members Present: Ivy Vann, Tom Weeks, Jerry Galus, Alan Zeller, Bob Holt and Rich Clark.

Staff Present: Peter Throop, Director, and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development.

Chair Vann called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and introduced the members. She noted two items on the agenda for the evening.

“With no Minutes to approve we can move straight to the public hearing” said Chair Vann adding “but I would like to explain what we are doing tonight.” Chair Vann explained the two cases were related and that they would open both the cases at the same time. “The two are so enmeshed in each other and straight forward that this is the best way to approach it.” Chair Vann then read the applications.

An Application for Minor Subdivision: An application proposes a one (1) lot subdivision of U017-023-000 located at 46 Grove Street, in the Downtown Commercial zoning district, to create a new .77 acre parcel with 58.2 feet of frontage on Grove Street. The remainder of Parcel U017-023-000 will be .38 acres and will have 73.95 feet of frontage on Grove Street.

Application for Boundary Line Adjustment: An application to adjust the boundary line between U017-022-000 located at 42 Grove Street, in the Downtown Commercial zoning district, and the abutting new parcel created by the previous subdivision. The boundary line adjustment will transfer approximately .58 acres to the new parcel resulting in a total area of 1.35 acres and the remainder area of U017-022-000 will be approximately .70 acres.

The purpose of the Subdivision and Boundary Line Adjustment is to create a new 1.35 acre parcel to be used to construct a new municipal parking facility and extend the common pathway along the Contoocook River. In accordance with Section 237-8 of the Planning Board Subdivision Regulations, both proposals are eligible for expedited review, wherein the applications may be “submitted, accepted as complete, and voted on at the same meeting.” If the applications are not decided at this meeting, they will stay on the Board’s agenda until they are approved or denied.

A motion was made/seconded (Weeks/Galus) to accept both the applications as substantially complete with all in favor.

Department of Public Works Director Rodney Bartlett introduced himself. He gave a brief history of the May 13th Open Session Articles at the 2015 Town Meeting and the request \$1,143,562.00 for the purposes of constructing a parking lot, road access, pedestrian bridge and associated activities as well as land acquisition of a portion of the two lots in this case. He told the members “initially the access was at the GAR Hall but it was determined that the site was not conducive to development due to its grade and slopes.” He went on to tell the members a suitable (almost natural) access location was found between the properties of 42 and 46 Grove Street and an agreement with those property owners had been negotiated.

“The plan in front of you is based on a preliminary plan and it is not quite done, we will present a full site plan review at a later date” he said. Mr. Bartlett went on to review the status of the sewer easement and Shoreland permit from DES, meetings with the Conservation Commission and the issue of pavement on the Peterson property being too close to the property line. “We will work those details out with Heather (Peterson)” he said. Chair Van agreed noting “we’ll get this done and then they will come back with a formal design.” Mr. Weeks asked about obtaining a variance for the pavement issue with Mr. Bartlett replying “not a variance” noting the future fate of the GAR Hall and access for the Peterson property in the future. Mr. Weeks noted the need to reduce pavement in the setback “or a Variance would be required” adding “also the plan as it is drawn here has the Conservation Zone at 100 feet but it is actually 50 feet in the Downtown Commercial District.”

Mr. Bartlett reiterated that a walking path and a pedestrian bridge were planned “but again, not knowing the final outcome for the GAR Hall we have not finalized anything.” When Mr. Weeks asked if removing the portion of the lot in the setback on the Peterson lot would affect the town’s parking (size) requirements Ms. Peterson replied “I hope not” adding “the spaces were originally approved for 10 by 20 feet and now the requirement is 10 by 18 feet. Losing space on the north side, even a square foot per space (or 4 feet) I would still have four approved spaces.” She went on to say “it *is* a parking lot with four spaces and when we get done it *will be* a parking lot with four spaces” and concluded by asking if the town had considered renting some parking space to the apartment complex at 46 Grove Street. “They desperately need space” she said.

As Chair Vann opened the hearing to the audience Hope Hunt of 49 Grove Street introduced herself and asked about the access to the parking lot. When the access way was pointed out she said “that is directly across from my house” and cautioned about the traffic in the street. “Sometimes Grove (Street) gets really backed up and sometimes it is a nightmare. I worry about the turning and entering traffic” she said.

Eric Blackmer of 56 Grove Street introduced himself and asked about the housing trust building. “They are sorely in need of parking” he said and asked “would there be parking for them in this lot?” Mr. Bartell replied “it is a public parking lot.” Mr. Blackmer asked “could the lot be extended to their back yard?” “Not yet” replied Mr. Bartlett. When Mr. Blackmer asked about the Common Pathway Mr. Bartlett told him the bridge and sidewalk around the lot up to Grove Street was identified as part of the Common Pathway but further to the south along the railroad corridor was not established. “We have not had complete cooperation of land owners out to Route 101” he said.

“I am just trying to find out what is happening said Mr. Blackmer. Chair Vann replied “at the moment it is pretty contained.” Mr. Blackmer asked about the width of the pedestrian bridge with Chair Vann noting “you are a little ahead of us, we have not seen the site plan yet.”

Chair Vann closed the Public Hearing at 6:45 p.m. and appointed Mr. Holt to sit.

Deliberation:

Mr. Clark began by asking for clarification on the reduction of the Shoreline Conservation Zone to 50 feet. Mr. Weeks explained the Shoreline Conservation zone is typically 100 feet of the natural high-water mark of any pond, river, stream or brook “*except* in the Downtown Commercial District where the setback is only 50 feet” he said adding “that will have to be corrected prior to signature of the plan.”

Mr. Weeks went on to note the new boundary line is shown to be within 2 feet of the edge of the existing parking lot “but the zoning in the District is a setback of 5 feet from the rear property line” and concluded “they will have to conform by cutting it back or obtain a Variance to §245-32B1.”

A motion was made/seconded (Weeks/Zeller) to approve the one (1) lot Subdivision request for Cara Hills, LLC located at 46 Grove Street, Parcel U017-023-000 and the Boundary Line Adjustment for Heather D. & Andrew R. Peterson located at 42 Grove Street, Parcel U017-022-000 on plan entitled “Subdivision and Boundary Line Adjustment Plan Tax Map Parcels U017-022-000 & U017-023-000

42 & 46 Grove Street Peterborough, New Hampshire Dated September 10, 2015” by Fieldstone Land Consultants, PLLC, consisting of one page subject to the following conditions prior to signature of the plan:

1. The existing rear parking area setback on parcel U017-022-000 to be brought into compliance with §245-32B1 and the plan to be revised to show the easterly edge of the parking area in conformance with the required five (5) foot rear setback requirement or a Variance to §245-32B1 is to be obtained.
2. Plan to be revised to show the appropriate 50-foot Shoreland Conservation Zone line.

With all in favor.

Discussion regarding the amendment to Zoning Ordinance section 245-26 Open Space Residential Development:

Chair Vann began with “the issue I see with the existing Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) Ordinance is similar to the thing which I see in general in Peterborough which is Peterborough does not have a lot of manufacturing, it is not going to. It is too hard to get trucks in and out. It is just not going to happen.” She went on to say “we do not have a big agricultural section but what we do have going for us is that the town is attractive. It is a pretty little town and it is crucial as a Board to think about how to preserve that and maintain the draw to the assets we have. We are a nice place and if that stops, we have nothing.” Chair Vann went on to note the importance of identifying the balance of those assets with the rights of the land owners using their land in a way that is fair.

Mr. Throop added “being a nice place to live is a tremendous asset to attracting small businesses. “We don’t need to be a bedroom community” he said. He noted residents that have brought their businesses to town as well as those who have started and grown their businesses here. Chair Vann interjected “and that is an example of why *we do* care about what color something is” adding “we are not awash in buildings that could be anywhere, we are not awash in franchises and that is why people come here.” She stopped and looked around the table and asked “so what do we do? What are the issues?” as she went on to explain that when the town created zoning in the 1970s, 80s, and early 90s “often in the Rural Zone we created zoning that was too big or too small, too big to create additional village nodes and too small to maintain the rural character.”

Chair Vann spoke briefly about creating a potential overlay district for South Peterborough for another village node “instead of this” as she pointed to a development off Burke Road. With regards to the large homes of this particular development Mr. Zeller interjected “the market is not requesting that anymore” with Chair Vann adding “we need to get those responding to the market to think that way. In theory you can do this anywhere in town and then you get suburbia.” Mr. Throop reminded the members “and when we asked what is important the public responded *the rural character of the town.*”

The members reviewed the map they had worked with at their Workshop and discussed several neighborhood developments with Chair Vann noting “again, many of them are too big and too small, Too big to mow and too small to plow.” The members also briefly discussed transfer of development rights, setting up trades and incentives for the type of development they would like to see including more houses in a smaller area with existing or extended town water and sewer facilities.

Chair Vann concluded by noting “OK, two things. We should talk about an amendment to the Infill Ordinance (Traditional Neighborhood Infill Ordinance) so it may be used where town water and sewer can be extended for service (and) amend the OSRD in terms of it to say “that it starts with a site walk and preliminary conceptual consultation before the applicant has spent any money. Those are the two things I would like to do this year.”

Chair Vann then asked the members to think about taking some language from the Infill Ordinance “and see if we can use similar language and make an overlay for a new village node in Peterborough, specifically South Peterborough.” Though unsure of how much development would be needed to support restoration of the bridge in South Peterborough Mr. Throop reminded the members of the potential of creating a TIF District for that area.

As Mr. Weeks noted the erosion problems of the southern part of town, Mr. Throop noted the importance full drainage plans *and* site visits. Mr. Throop noted some erosion problems at the Divine Mercy Church that must be repaired. Chair Vann pointed out “and that is not about steep slopes, it is about soil types.”

The members then had a brief discussion about preservation of the rural character of the town, connected neighborhoods, setbacks, existing roads, traditional infill with OSRD. Mr. Weeks noted the importance of the education and awareness of the property owners citing extensive work that had been done in the past only to be crushed by the property owners in the end. The members briefly discussed 2-acre

lots in the Rural District. Chair Vann noted “I think we have time to rewrite the ordinance to a 2-acre lot or keep it at 3 acres with a Conditional Use Permit.”

The members also discussed minor versus regular subdivision and a legal way to manage them. Mr. Clark noted minor subdivisions of lots already subdivided with one member interjecting “that is how New Jersey and Connecticut got build out.” Mr. Throop asked this be specifically mentioned in the Minutes as an action item. He also suggested a forum of some kind “to walk through the process of looking at subdivisions throughout the town, what you like, what you do not. Identify the characteristics of what you like and shift the regulations to retain those characteristics” adding “this is all driven by community input, not the Board.”

Chair Vann reiterated the importance of this input early on “even if we have to write a personal note inviting them and making follow-up phone calls.” Mr. Throop noted the time spent on subdivision and site plan regulations is intensive “but it makes it clear that people care about what the town looks like.” Chair Vann agreed adding “and it gives more validity and support to influencing what is approved in town. Corporate designs, corporate logos and colors can degrade the character of the community.” She concluded by noting “if we let that happen, we do not have a sweet little town anymore.”

Next Meeting:

October 12, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant