

## **Planning Board December 3, 2013**

**Members Present were:** Chair Ernie Allain, Members, Aline Boucher, Greg Estrella, Tom McCue, Mark Evans, Ex Officio Lucie Remillard and, Alternate Members John White, Richard Cassidy, and Lori Langlois

**Excused:** David Morin, Martha Creegan, and Susan Tremblay

**Other present:** Pamela Laflamme, Community Development Director; James Wheeler, City Manager

**Chair Allain opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. and appointed Ms. Langlois, Mr. White and Mr. Cassidy as voting members for this meeting**

**Public Comments:** None

**November Minutes:** Mr. McCue asked about the discussion on the Smith and Town Site Plan project. It was determined that both he and Mr. Morin should have been shown as recusing themselves from the final vote. Ms. Boucher pointed out that the public comments section should have read there were “no” public comments. With the noted changes, Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Estrella, and the board voted in favor of the motion.

### **Lot Mergers:**

The City is applying for two lot mergers. These are parcels that are currently out for sale to the public and staff wishes to merge them prior to the sale. These mergers either meet or exceed the current lot sizes set by the Zoning Ordinance.

- 1. Map 120 Lots 24 and 68** is located on the corner of Memorial and Willow Street. This property is a building sale. Ms. Boucher made a motion to approve the merger, seconded by Mr. White. The motion was passed unanimously.
- 2. Map 120 Lots 279 and 280** is located on the corner of High and Collins Street. This property is a land sale and has no issues with zoning. Ms. Langlois made a motion to approve the merger, seconded by Ms. Boucher. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Capital Improvement Program Presentation:**

Chair Allain introduced the City Manager, James Wheeler to the board. Mr. Wheeler shared with the board the basics around Capital Improvement Plans. The latest plan is for 6 years and is for projects that are valued at over \$10,000 with a life expectancy of more than three years. This plan has been shared with the City Council. This plan is important for budgeting purposes. Mr. Wheeler explained how the plan impacts the tax rate. The first year of the plan proposes 4 million dollars' worth of projects. There was discussion about the difficulties in prioritizing projects and working with department heads and the City

Council to efficiently choose projects. It is hoped that upcoming housing valuation shifts the property values up which could potentially make it easier in the future to budget for future projects.

There was a brief discussion about upcoming transportation projects that will actually be financed by a bond rather than through the CIP. Mr. McCue mentioned the fact that there is an extensive amount of retaining walls and sidewalks to maintain beyond just road work. There was another discussion about Public Works equipment and that will be a focus of the City Council in the near future. Councilor Remillard mentioned the importance of the road work and housing improvements and shared the importance of visual results related to how tax dollars are spent. Mr. Evans noted that the Route 110 project was not in the plan and asked why, it is significant because the project is finally underway and no longer needed to be in the plan.

Mr. Evans made a motion to approve the CIP 2015-2020 as presented, seconded by Ms. Boucher, all members voted in favor of the motion.

#### **Site Plan Review Regulations –review & update:**

Ms. Laflamme reviewed the document and some of the potential issues with it given its age. Obvious conflicts are state laws that may no longer be relevant. There were small issues such a staff title changes, fee structure, etc. However, it makes sense to have the board look through the document to see if there are philosophical changes that need to be made. How important is landscaping to the board as an example. The board should consider what items are necessary and what may need to be more restrictive or less restrictive depending on the circumstance.

There was a discussion about modifications coming back to the planning board. Councilor Remillard thinks the board should keep that provision to provide tighter oversight and not let anything slip through a crack or loophole. The board agreed consistency was important. There were also conversations about how plans are stored and the need to be more digitally rather than being focused on paper and Mylar.

The board agreed it made sense to continue thinking and reviewing the regulations and discussing further at the January meeting.

#### **Other:**

1. **PSNH Boundary Line Adjustment:** Ms. Laflamme explained that at the September board meeting, the board approved a boundary line adjustment between the City and PSNH which was not be recorded until the sale. The sale is imminent, so the recording will happen soon. The board did not vote to allow Chair Allain to sign the plans on their behalf. Ms. Boucher made a motion to appoint to have Chair Allain sign the boundary line adjustment plan for the City of Berlin and PSNH. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cassidy, and all members voted in favor of the motion.

2. **Crematoriums:** Mr. McCue asked about whether there needed to be a connection to existing funeral homes. Ms. Laflamme explained that there did not need to be as the previous crematorium in Berlin was a standalone facility. No matter which type of project is proposed (connected or standalone) all projects will need to come before the Zoning board for a special exception. It was noted that the City Council expanded the use to Business General and Industrial Business zones as well.

**Public Comments:** There were no public comments.

**Member Comments:** Chair Allain mentioned the board should probably start looking at and reviewing the Master Plan. The board will start work on that in February. Mr. McCue mentioned the biomass facility and when the startup is scheduled to occur, the plan is still by year end. Mr. White asked about the responsibility of the retaining walls mentioned during the CIP discussion. Mr. Allain shared that while employed with the City he did historic research on who owned which walls and worked with the college to inventory them. Many of the walls that the City owns are in poor condition as they were last built in the 1940's. Many of the walls need repair but funds are difficult to get for this purpose. Mr. Estrella asked about zoning and traffic safety and who is responsible for maintenance of vegetation. That issue is currently in front of the City Council.

**Planner Comments:** Ms. Laflamme mentioned that there will be a workshop on December 4 that will discuss and give feedback to the State's Site Evaluation Committee process for large scale energy projects. She also told the board there will be information about a management plan for Mount Jasper in near future for the board to review and give input.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Evans moved to adjourn; Ms. Remillard seconded his motion and the motion carried.