

## **Planning Board June 4, 2013**

**Present were:** Chair Ernie Allain, Regular Members Greg Estrella, David Morin, Mark Evans, Martha Creegan, Aline Boucher and Tom McCue; Ex-Officio Member Sue Tremblay; Alternate Members Richard Cassidy, John White, and Lori Langlois; absent were Lucie Remillard and Andre Duchesne

**Others present:** Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*; Jay Poulin HEB Engineering; Olivia Bealeau and Mike Claflin, AHEAD; Phil Bennett of Alba Architects; Lynn Lipari, and public

**Public Comments** – there were no comments

### **Approval of May Minutes**

Mr. Morin moved with a second from Mr. Estrella to approve the minutes of the May 2013 meeting as presented. So moved, the motion carried.

### **Notre Dame Housing Project – Pre-Application Review**

Representatives of AHEAD came before the Board to present their plans for Notre Dame in a pre-application review. AHEAD has taken over the project from Tri County CAP and they are developing it into a sheltered care facility with 33 units. Jay Poulin explained that they are hoping to come back for the July meeting with an application for site plan review.

The project is on two lots that will be merged. It is a difficult site due to access with steep slopes and limited parking. The access off Houle Street will be removed as the grade there is too challenging. Parking areas to accommodate 33 vehicles will be created on the east and west end of the building; however there will not be full driveway access around the building. There are four floors at different elevations and the building will be equipped with an elevator. Everything outside of pavement will be green space. A new municipal water service, municipal sewer and drainage lines are anticipated.

There will be site lighting in the parking areas which will need Planning Board approval. Zoning issues will be accessory structures such as a pellet storage facility and a cooling tower.

Architect Phil Bennett explained that the building will have a hybrid high efficiency heating and cooling system. The Chapel in the building will be maintained to serve as community space. The project uses every inch of the interior space. The lower level of the building will house a salon, and therapy rooms. Mr. Cassidy asked if the cooling tower could be on roof and Mr. Bennet stated that it is 20 feet high and would be more prevalent if it were on the roof. Mr. Morin confirmed that most deliveries would come by Guilmette Street. Mr. Estrella established that there is one commercial grade elevator for all the units and there will be stairways inside. The Shrine outside of the building will be retained.

Mr. McCue commented that he is glad to see the project moving away from Houle Street due to the severe slopes. He expressed concern over the condition of Guilmette and Cambridge Streets. He asked about the effect of the cooling tower on people living above. Mr. Bennett indicated that only the top of the tower will be seen from the street and the only exhaust from the building will be from pellets used for heat at the location of the existing chimney. Mr. McCue added that this may be an opportunity to tie in to improvements to School Street. Mr. Poulin stated that there is not a lot of street work involved in this project.

Mr. McCue commented that this project will be a catalyst for renovation in the neighborhood. Mr. Allain asked if there will guard rail in the sloped area and Mr. Poulin stated that there would be curbing, at the least, retainage/fencing may be needed.

Mr. Poulin reported that they will be back in July with hopes of starting the project this year. Ms. Bealeu said that there will be a local firm providing services to the residents. The apartments allow for aging in place with functional kitchens in the apartments and a community dining area and warming kitchen. All are one bedroom apartments.

Mr. Morin asked about snow storage and commented that the limited storage area will call for an aggressive maintenance plan.

Mr. Evans confirmed that the City owns the building that they acquired by tax deed several years ago. He asked if the old site plan is expired and Ms. Laflamme clarified that the designs presented were preliminary and now that more work has been done, they don't make sense for the site. Mr. Evans affirmed that a new approved site plan will replace the CAP site plan. Representatives of AHEAD thanked the Board and left the meeting at this time.

### **Zoning Ordinance Discussion**

Ms. Laflamme reported that one of the most popular requests to City staff is to keep chickens in the urban areas. Citizens came to the City Council and Mayor Grenier wanted to hear more about what other communities are doing. Dover, Lebanon, and Concord have similar standards to one another allowing 4 to 6 chickens and no roosters. How many feet the chicken coop can be from the property line differs.

Ms. Laflamme acknowledged that lot size is a concern, with many lots in Berlin being 50 x 100, it is not a lot of room. Ms. Laflamme stated that the standard among other communities is to require a 10000 square foot lot; chickens are also for personal use only.

Concerns of the Board included:

Consideration of the cost of enforcement. Mr. Morin made the point that someone would have to supervise and enforce any regulation allowing chickens in a time when the City is cutting back on staff. How does one add responsibility when we are in a budget that is reducing personnel at Fire Department Recreation, and Zoning?

Liability issues and licensing. Mr. McCue suggested licensing to allow chickens; he warned to be wary of liability issues.

Roaming chickens. Ms. Creegan questioned whether chickens are left to roam and Ms. Laflamme stated that the ordinance can be specific to allow only fenced in enclosures.

Protocol for complaints. It was a concern of the board that people would not check the rules before acquiring the chickens resulting in complaints. Mr. McCue added that several departments could be involved; he could see code enforcement and health having a role.

Novelty factor. Mr. Morin suggested that chickens are allowed in certain areas of the city and a co-op could be established to achieve the result. He worried that chickens are a novelty now, but what happens when the novelty wears off?

Manure. Mr. Estrella expressed concern about the foul odor from chicken manure. Ms. Laflamme informed the board that most communities require that the pile is covered so that the smell is not out there. Mr. McCue added that the droppings could end up at the curb for pick up with garbage.

Security. Mr. McCue suggested some security so that if chickens are left abandoned, there is money bring things back the way they were.

Ms. Laflamme stated that single family, residential, would be a candidate zone for chickens; no multi- family residences would be allowed to have them; the application process would provide notice to abutters, and several other conditions could be placed at the discretion of the Planning Board and the City Council.

Ms. Creegan said that she needs more information and lot size would be key. Mr. Evans said he likes the idea and doesn't have any concerns. Chair Allain said that he is not opposed but there should be a license.

### **Lot Mergers**

City of Berlin Tax Map 128; Lot 190 and Lot 191 on Main Street. These are adjacent lots the city owns and merging will make them more marketable. Mr. Morin moved to approve the lot merger; Mrs. Boucher seconded and the motion carried with all voting in favor.

Gary Coulombe, 247 Norway Street, Tax Map 127; Lots 215 & 214. Gary Coulombe has his primary home on Lot 215 and recently bought 214. He was originally going to demo the house on 214; however he now wants to use the building for storage/gameroom. Electricity and plumbing to the building will remain. He wants to merge the lots to have a better size lot and for insurance purposes.

Ms. Laflamme stated that we do not typically merge two lots with primary buildings on them and if the Board is not comfortable, the item can be tabled. Conditions can be placed on such a merger to include that the building on 214 cannot be used as a residential dwelling, only as an accessory, ancillary or secondary building to the building on Lot 215. Mr. McCue added that it could not be used as a business.

He suggested making it clear in the conditions that there needs to be only one primary building on the merged lot.

Mr. Allain asked what will be done with the driveway and Ms. Laflamme did not have the answer. She offered to go back to Mr. Coulombe. Mr. Evans did not see a concern.

Mr. Evans moved with a second from Mrs. Boucher to approve the lot merger on the condition that only one structure on the newly merged lot can be deemed a residential/primary structure; other structures are accessory, ancillary or secondary structures. So moved, the motion carried. Mr. Morin opposed.

**Other** - none

### **Public Comments**

Lynn Lipari commented that she will do what she can to get additional information so that chickens are allowed.

**Member Comments**

Mr. Evans stated that he went to the OEP Conference and brought back an information packet. The material is also available on the OEP web site.

**Planner Comments**

Thursday is Drive in the 50's

Alpine Machine volunteered to put up the new banners in time for Drive in the 50's

Ms. Laflamme reported that she and Chair Allain have been working on street signage from Green Square to the Berlin/Gorham town line and the hope is to get new signs ordered by the end of the month.

The Gazebo roof will be repaired by Mike Couch and Roland Berthiaume who will donate the labor.

There will be a meeting Thursday, June 13 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall where Watershed to Wildlife will present their recommendations and findings regarding the current conditions of Mount Jasper.

There will be a ribbon cutting for the installation of the kiosk at the base of Mt. Jasper Monday, June 10 at noon.

Tuesday, June 11, at 1:00 p.m. there will be a dedication of the Visitor Center at Jericho Mountain to former Mayor Danderson.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Morin moved to adjourn; Ms. Boucher seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Susan Tremblay  
Administrative Assistant