

## **Planning Board March 3, 2015**

Present were: Chair Ernie Allain, Members Greg Estrella, Aline Boucher, Mark Evans, Martha Creegan, Lori Langlois, Tom McCue; Ex-Officio Member, Sue Tremblay and Alternate Member John White. Richard Cassidy and Lucie Remillard were excused.

Others present included Community Development Director Pam Laflamme and Barbara Tetreault from the Berlin Daily Sun.

Public Comments – none

### **Approval of February Minutes**

Mrs. Boucher moved to approve the minutes of the February meeting as presented; Mr. Estrella seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### **Site Plan Review (continued) tabled from 2/3/15 – Parking Facility Application Jericho Road, Paul Croteau**

Ms. Laflamme explained that Mr. Croteau is exploring another option and he wants to preserve his current application to keep his options open. Mr. Evans moved to table Mr. Croteau's site plan review application; Ms. Langlois seconded and the motion carried. This shall serve as the official notice that the Planning Board will continue the application at their April 7 meeting.

### **Vision Statement**

Ms. Laflamme explained that Master Plans are supposed to be reviewed and updated every ten years. When the City's most recent plan was adopted in 2010, the Board agreed to review and update the portions of the plan periodically. It's been five years and the foundation that we set the plan onto is still viable; however there are changes that could be made.

The reference to the ATV trail park does not reflect how big it has become. There was a lot of focus on the mill site five years ago and now the biomass is complete. If there is discussion to be had regarding the mill site, it is more about how to develop the remaining acres and about the Superfund site.

The Master Plan's Energy chapter could be revised to reflect that the city is embracing wind, hydro, biomass, and Berlin has the highest concentration of pellet boilers in the US. Mr. McCue mentioned that the Cultural Chapter could tie in how big RiverFire and the ATV Festival have gotten.

The Master Plan references Mt. Jasper and the effort to stabilize, preserve and regulate the area has been complete. Ms. Laflamme noted that there would have to be a public hearing on any proposed changes to the plan.

Mr. McCue commented that the river has become more of a focus and that could be expanded on. Ms. Creegan noted that educational opportunities were not mentioned. They include the Community College as well as the high school's STEM Program. WREN is providing a wealth of opportunity in the City.

There is still an excess of residential units and the plan should address ways of rehabilitating or demolishing the excess. Ms. Creegan confirmed that amendments in the plan would be added with the date of the update.

Ms. Langlois commented that the Plan has references to the 110 bypass and that project is nearly complete. She added that paving streets and roads throughout the City could be part of the vision.

Ms. Laflamme discussed the Ski Jump restoration project. There is a group from the Nansen Ski Club, DRED and local volunteers who intend to make changes in small steps. This summer brush will be cut back and they will apply for small grants for the ski jump to be saved and redone. The group has a wide range of goals for near term and long term.

Ms. Laflamme stated that there is a community in the US that has an energy facility where ancillary heat and steam heats the streets and sidewalks in the downtown.

Mr. Estrella questioned what authority decides architectural design in the downtown, referring to the Rite Aid building. Ms. Laflamme explained that the Planning Board has the authority to go back and forth with the developer to be sure the building belongs in the environment. If we want to attract development we should leave room and latitude for a developer to make changes to their plans without having strict design standards. Mr. McCue agreed that for a community anxious for economic development it is better not to have a hard and fast set of standards.

Getting back to the Master Plan Ms. Tremblay mentioned that the Housing Chapter should address the potential of a market to sell second homes for recreational use. Mrs. Boucher added that the City needs a high end retirement community for people who want to go away for the winter or travel but have Berlin as their primary home.

Ms. Laflamme asked for thoughts and comments to be sent to her so that she can compile for the board to review potential changes prior to making any amendments.

### **Project Updates**

Ms. Laflamme reviewed projects that are going on in Berlin.

- Northern Lights is doing energy efficiency improvements to their 63 units of housing. They will also install a new air exchange system.
- There are 13 units of housing going in at Bartlett school.
- The Notre Dame housing project is accepting applications for their apartments. Application can be made to the NH Housing Finance Authority.

- The second phase of Route 110 is ongoing and DOT is buying strips of land to help with parking in the area of Rudy's Market
- Hutchins Street will be resurfaced this summer and the details are being finalized.
- Route 16 will have pre work done this summer but the project is not likely to start until 2016.

Mr. Estrella asked if there is a guarantee of how long Hutchins Street will last if excavation of the bark base is not part of the project. Ms. Laflamme stated that there is not enough money to re-route Hutchins Street or to excavate all of the bark. Hutchins Street will be built in place and it will greatly improve the road and stabilize the base; however there is no guarantee.

### **Other**

Ms. Laflamme stated that she will send along information on the Spring Planning and Zoning Conference that is occurring in May.

Energy Solutions Conference will be March 21.

Saving Special Places is April 11. Anyone wanting to attend any of these conferences or workshops should call or e-mail.

**Public Comments** – none

### **Member Comments**

Mr. Estrella stated that he was recently misquoted in the newspaper. His comments were regarding Mr. Croteau's proposed parking area on Wight Street. He questions the use of a wooden fence and commented that it would be time consuming for the building inspector to get permission to view the property whereas a chain link fence would allow visual access.

**Planner Comments** – none

### **Adjournment**

Mrs. Boucher moved with a second from Mr. McCue to adjourn the meeting. So moved, the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Susan Tremblay