



Town of Gorham
PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP NOTES
April 6, 2009

A workshop meeting of the Gorham Planning Board was held on Monday, April 6, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the Municipal Center Council Chambers, 75 South Street, Gorham, Maine.

In attendance were Susan Robie, Chairperson, Douglas Boyce, Vice Chairman, Thomas Fickett, Thomas Hughes, Michael Parker, Mark Stelmack, and Edward Zelmanow. Also present were Town Planner Deborah Fossum, Assistant Planner Thomas Poirier, and Planning Board Clerk Barbara Skinner.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 9, 2009 WORKSHOP NOTES.

There were no comments or corrections to the March 9, 2009 Workshop Notes.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Robie said she will defer the Chairman's Report to the regular meeting, which will follow immediately after the workshop meeting.

Mr. Fickett advised the Board that he is an abutter to the project, off Waterhouse Road, but stated that he feels he can participate in the deliberations on this item without any conflict. The Board concurred that there will be no problem in Mr. Fickett's participation in workshop discussions.

3. Pre-Application Conference:

"Sawyer Estates Subdivision" -- By Chase Custom Homes & Finance, Inc. – off South Street

Pre-application conference on a proposed 102-lot residential subdivision on 103.59 acres off South Street under the Development Transfer Overlay District provisions. Zoned Rural/Suburban Residential (M21/L10, 16 & 17.016)

Lester Berry, BH2M Engineers, appeared on behalf of the applicant and said he is bringing back the Sawyer Estates project, which had been before the Planning Board in a pre-application stage in 2006. He described the parcel as a 103 acre parcel of land on the west side of Route 114, with the parcel split by a zone change down the center between Suburban Residential and Rural. He said there are 37 acres in the SR District portion and 66 in the Rural District portion. Mr. Berry said that in 1991 the former owner of the parcel, Harvey Sawyer, received approval for a subdivision from the Town, and also obtained a Site Location of Development Permit from the Maine DEP but nothing was done after that. In 2003 John Chase purchased the parcel, and in 2005 Mr. Chase bought the rear corner of the parcel, giving him a connection to the Heartwood Subdivision via Starlit Way.

Mr. Berry said the project is ideally suited for "infill" development and described it as "inside the bypass." The developer will spend the next year getting his approvals, but hopes there will be a market for entry level housing a year from now and hopes the development will provide an economic boost to reestablishing the housing market in Gorham.

Among issues to be considered is the zoning, as the Suburban Residential portion can accommodate 23 lots with a water/sewer bonus, and the Rural portion can accommodate 22 lots, for a total of 45 lots. However, Chase Custom Homes is proposing additional lots for a total of 102 lots under the Transfer Overlay District. Mr. Berry said their question to the Planning Board is what are the Board's expectations and what special features need to be considered. Ms. Robie mentioned the various pieces of literature that were provided when the Board workshoped this District and suggested that Mr. Berry get copies from the Planning office.

Ms. Robie noted that some of the issues in the District include that of useable open space for active recreation and house orientations. Mr. Berry demonstrated the proposed open space on the project, saying that probably half are wetlands and the other half uplands. Ms. Robie gave examples of “active” open space as ball fields, developed picnic areas, parks, and school bus stops.

Mr. Berry said they will need to secure a Site Law permit, which will encompass a 4 to 6 month delay, so they are expecting the process to take perhaps even as long as a year. The project will impact some 19,000 square feet of wetlands, which may require some sort of compensation.

He said that with over 100 houses, there are projected to be over 100 trips per both a.m. and p.m. peak hours, which will require a DOT movement permit, even though the location is within the Urban Compact Zone. A traffic study was done in 2003, and a scoping meeting was held with the DOT, at which time there was talk of a center turning lane on Route 114. The traffic engineer wants to redo the traffic counts, since the opening of the bypass may have made a significant impact on the amount of traffic on Route 114.

Mr. Berry discussed water and sewer for the project, noting that water will feed from Route 114 and from the Heartwood Subdivision, connecting on Starlit Way. Gravity sewerage to pump stations would require 3 separate pump stations, either pumping to Heartwood or up Route 114, which is not economically feasible. Instead, a pressure sewer system is being considered and has been discussed with the Town and the Portland Water District; both the Town and the PDW want more information such as a cost comparison between conventional and pressure sewers, information about maintenance issues, and the potential impact on sewer rates in Gorham. Discharge from a pressure sewer system would be either into the Heartwood pump station or up 114 to the Weeks Road manhole, both of which would cost the developer some \$250,000.

Mr. Berry then spoke about Crestwood Drive, saying that they can find no indication that the Town of Gorham has ever accepted that road, even though the Town has been plowing the road since 1991. According to the deeds, the developer bought the road when he bought the property and would like to have the road taken it over officially by the Town. There are also some abutter questions, such as the last lot on Crestwood belonging to the Hodgkins, who are concerned about buffers. He said that the Fyrberg property will have access on Starlit Way. Mr. Berry pointed out connections to abutting properties, noting that there appears to be only one potential connection.

Mr. Stelmack and Mr. Berry discussed the details of the pressure sewer system. Mr. Parker confirmed with Mr. Berry that no vernal pools have been located on the property, but Mr. Berry said that the soils report done in 2006 will be done again to confirm that the work done at that time is still valid. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Berry discussed the possible phasing of the project.

Mr. Berry asked the Board to consider scheduling a sitewalk.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD OPENED: Arthur Handman, 63 Quincy Drive, Heartwood Subdivision, spoke about the potential traffic problems involved in the use of Starlit Way. He expressed concern about whether and how pressure sewer systems work during a power loss. He asked whether the plans call for any additional schools to be built to accommodate the children who will live in this development.

Fred Robinson, 5 Keepaway, expressed concern about water flow, drainage, standing water.

Ken Mains, South Street, expressed concern as well about water flow and drainage.

Mr. Parker said he would like the people who are concerned about the water problem to be present at the site walk.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ENDED.

The workshop adjourned at 7:00 in order to proceed to the regularly scheduled Planning Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara C. Skinner, Clerk of the Board
_____, 2009