

Town of North Smithfield Planning Board

Kendall Dean School, 83 Greene Street

Thursday, January 7, 2010 7:00 PM

Mr. Naylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Roll Call

Present: Gene Simone, Scott Gibbs, Dean Naylor, Alex Biliouris, Joe Cardello, Art Bassett. Absent: Stephen Vowels. Also present was Town Planner Bob Ericson.

2. Approval of Minutes: December 10, 2009

Mr. Gibbs made a motion to approve the minutes of December 10, 2009. Mr. Cardello seconded the motion, with all in favor.

3. Annual Organization: Election of officers and consideration of rules

Mr. Ericson asked the Board for nominations for Chair of the Planning Board. Mr. Cardello nominated Mr. Gibbs. Mr. Simone seconded the motion. No other nominations were made. Vote was as follows: AYE: Mr. Simone, Mr. Biliouris, Mr. Cardello, Mr. Naylor. Mr. Gibbs abstained from the vote.

Mr. Gibbs took over the meeting as the new chair. He asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chair. Mr. Simone nominated Mr. Biliouris as Vice Chair. Mr. Cardello seconded the motion. No other nominations were made. All members voted in favor of the nomination.

Mr. Biliouris nominated Mr. Naylor as Secretary. Mr. Simone seconded the nomination. Mr. Cardello nominated Mr. Simone, but Mr. Simone refused the nomination. Vote was as follows (for Mr. Naylor as secretary): AYE: Mr. Simone, Mr. Biliouris, Mr. Gibbs, Mr. Naylor. Mr. Cardello abstained from the vote.

Mr. Ericson stated that the Board usually agrees to use a set of rules by which to conduct the meetings. The usual rules are Robert's Rules of Order, supplemented by house rules. He has a document prepared, as does Mr. Biliouris with suggestions for the rules. He will send these to the Board members for review and this can be discussed at the next meeting.

4. Marshfield Commons: Major Land Development Project Master Plan Informational Meeting

Owner/Applicant: William R. Landry, Esq.

Location: Mechanic Street, Assessor's Plat 1, Lots 69 & 423

Zoning: RS-40 (Suburban Residential)

Mr. Gibbs apologized to the applicant that the solicitor could not

make it to the meeting. He then explained that the Board would listen to the applicant's entire presentation before hearing comments from the Board or the public.

Bill Landry was present for the applicant and explained that the application is for a Comprehensive Permit. This means that the Planning Board will be acting in place of all other Town boards and commissions on this application. The Board will have the authority to grant zoning variances, zoning changes, etc. This will streamline the process for the applicant. North Smithfield needs to meet the 10% requirement for Low and Moderate Income housing, and it is presently at 9.3%. If approved, this project will put the town at the 10% requirement and insulate against future applications of this type of housing.

The applicant is requesting to build a 38-unit affordable housing development. In regard to LMI housing, Mr. Landry stated that the biggest need for northern Rhode Island is affordable rental housing. The applicant is in position to partner with a non-profit group, which will in turn allow them to qualify for federal and state funding. This will lower the cost of the housing for future tenants.

Mr. Landry explained that at this Master Plan stage of the project, the applicant is not presenting a fully-engineered project. It is well-thought out, but not until Preliminary Plan stage will they have fully-engineered plans, especially with regard to water, sewer, and

drainage, for the Board and public to review.

Project architect John O’Hearne gave a presentation, providing an overview of the proposed development. Marshfield Commons will be located on the site of an old farmstead on Mechanic Street. The development will consist of 17 two-bedroom units, 20 three-bedroom units, and 1 one-bedroom unit. The buildings are designed as duplexes, with some larger buildings designed to look like single-family houses. The existing farm house will be renovated and used as an apartment and an office. Four of the buildings will be handicapped accessible. Mr. O’Hearne provided pictures of some of the existing homes on Mechanic Street and followed-up with computer renditions of the proposed housing in the development. The development will be built around a town green style common area. The only waiver they are anticipating is one for height on one of the larger buildings.

Landscape architect Diane Soule presented the landscaping plans. There will be street trees planted on Mechanic Street and on the street within the development, as well as additional trees planted as a buffer to abutting properties. These will be a mixture of deciduous and ornamental flowering trees along both sides of the internal street. The town common area will have additional trees and shrubs planted to supplement the existing trees. These will be a mixture of pine and spruce. The plans also call for the addition of a detention pond. The large existing tree in the common area will be saved. The common

area is planned as a stroll-through area with trees and shrubs. Additional plantings will be added around each building at a later stage.

Site engineer Scott Moorehead of SFM Engineering stated that while the site plans are not fully-engineered, the grading, drainage, and utilities all work with the proposed layout. Using the plans, he highlighted the location of wetlands and the existing storm drain. He said that the storm drain appears to be a town drain, but there is no record of an easement. The homes in the development will tie in to the town sewers. There is no public water available at the site, and the development will be too dense for individual wells. Therefore, the applicant is proposing to extend the public water across Victory Highway, down Florence Street, and then extend it out to Mechanic Street.

Mr. Moorehead stated that he has been working with Mr. Ericson, and as a result, the revised plans have relocated Buildings 6 & 7, and variances will no longer be needed. The homes will have patios and no decks.

Mr. Moorehead gave an overview of the drainage on the site. The natural flow is west to east. The drainage plan is to continue the natural drainage through a culvert and through the wetlands. The center of the site has overland sheet flow. In the developed portion of the site, the plan is to infiltrate as much water as possible. Test pits

have been dug and it was found that there is quite a good infiltration rate. The plans also make use of rain gardens and pervious driveways. The main roadway will have catch basins that flow to an infiltration basin. As much as possible, they will try to replicate the natural draining. The net effect will be that downstream properties will have a decrease in runoff. The plans need to be completed and reviewed by DEM and the Town's engineer, but Mr. Moorehead is quite confident that there will be no major issues.

Mr. Moorehead stated that a traffic study was conducted in 2006. At that time, 42 units were proposed. The study took traffic counts at all intersections and found that the surrounding roadways operate at a level of service A or B and this development will have no significant impact on this level of service.

He then informed the Board and the public that before the Preliminary Plan review stage, the plans will be fully-engineered. The plans will be sent to DEM for review, and if they have any issues that call for the elimination of units, the applicant will modify the plans. The traffic study will be submitted to the Board for review. The drainage will be revised in order to provide a greater landscape buffer, though Mr. Moorehead feels, due to the research and analysis (including the test holes) that has been completed, that DEM will approve the plans. It is his opinion that the development of the site will have no adverse impact on the current residents.

Terri Barbosa, representing Blackstone Valley NeighborWorks, explained the mission of her organization, as well as other projects they have completed. The most recent development was The Meadows, the 80-unit senior living facility on Greenville Road. She presented pictures of Woodridge Estates, which is the same type of development as Marshfield Commons would be. The mission of her organization is to provide affordable housing in northern Rhode Island. The relationship that Blackstone Valley NeighborWorks has with Rhode Island Housing puts them in the position to get tax credit subsidies and loans and to garner grants and subsidized loans through federal and state sources. They have submitted the financial plan to RI Housing and Blackstone Valley NeighborWorks will work as the monitoring agency.

Ms. Barbosa stated that the organization is rigid in terms of upkeep of the developments, both internally and externally (painting, landscaping, etc.).

The Chair opened and asked the Board for their comments or questions.

Mr. Biliouris asked if the applicant would be seeking reduced rates in tying into the sewers. Mr. Landry stated they do not intend to seek a reduction.

Mr. Cardello stated that he thinks the project is good, but would like

to see the rules of the planning process followed so that the applicant is truly acting in partnership with the Town. He stated that a Pre-Application hearing should have taken place. He had many concerns or comments on the proposal. First, he stated that the density calculations do not factor in land unsuitable for development.

Mr. Cardello had many concerns on the safety issues associated with the proposed 14' wide roadway. He said that the fire and police departments should be consulted at this stage. He also stated that the road should be built to town standards and that a cross-section should be submitted with the plans and that the road structure should take the water table into account. He also said that since a 14' road may not be approved by the Board, the applicant should think about how the drainage system will be affected if a wider road is built. He asked about the traffic study and whether the numbers from 2006 were revised to reflect the current conditions.

Mr. Cardello cautioned the Board that while the Master Plan stage is conceptual, if they approve the plans as presented, they are agreeing to a 14' wide road with on-street parking. He stated that the Master Plan should be representative of what the Board will ultimately want to approve.

He asked about the parking calculations and pointed out that Units 8, 9, and the office have no exclusive parking, which means all parking for those units will be on the street.

Mr. Cardello also stated that a site walk should be scheduled per the rules in the subdivision regulations.

The Chair asked Ms. Barbosa about the methodology in determining the mix of units in the development. Ms. Barbosa stated that they look at the demographic and the need, through which they determined that the greatest need is for family rentals since there is a significant lack of three-bedroom rental units in North Smithfield. The Chair asked if the Board could get more specific information, including potential fiscal impacts to the town.

The Chair also echoed Mr. Cardello's comments the Board needs feedback from other town departments, especially the police and fire departments and asked for comment from the Water Department on the water supply and demand. Mr. Cardello asked that each department be made aware of the specifics of the plans (i.e. street width) to make sure they understand what they are commenting on. Mr. Ericson stated that he will work with the applicant to obtain feedback from town entities and to make sure that their requests are clear.

The Board and Mr. Ericson discussed a list of things they need from the applicants, which included the following: density calculations, parking requirements, waiver requests, tenants' manual from a similar project, and a fiscal impact statement (school-age children per

unit). Mr. Naylor asked if the Building Official was aware of the details of the project. Mr. Ericson stated that he has worked with Mr. Benoit and they have gone over the plans thoroughly. Mr. Ericson stated that he is also currently pushing for the formation of a Technical Review Committee in town.

The Chair opened up the meeting to public comment at 8:25 pm.

Connie Joly of North Main Street asked if the public water that will be brought to the site will be from Slatersville and whether others will be able to tie in to the system. Mr. Moorehead stated that it will be Woonsocket water and that it will be a public water line.

Dr. Lucien Benoit addressed the Board with some concerns. He asked that the requested height variance be denied so the developer will have to make the building lower. He also cautioned that the Board should request a very strict legal document stating that any private services they agree to provide continue in perpetuity. He pointed out that in the Laurelwood development, many services were supposed to be private, but that they later asked for public services, such as trash pickup, which the Town Council granted. He agreed with Mr. Cardello that a 14' wide road is too narrow. He asked that more of the units be one-bedroom to allow for seniors to move into the development. He is concerned that the number of three-bedroom units will cause too many school-age children to move into town and there is not enough space in the school system. Mr. Simone asked if

they could require that the road be built to town standards and have the town accept the road up front rather than having to deal with it in future.

Ana Parsons of 72 Mechanic Street said she is concerned with the number of additional cars that the development will bring to the neighborhood. With the plans calling for 98 parking spaces, that makes close to 100 cars that will be using Mechanic Street daily. Mechanic Street is not wide enough for two SUV's to pass. She asked the Board to visit the site and consider how the parking and the number of vehicles will be supported. She asked that the Board deny the plans as presented, as they are beyond what's acceptable. Mr. Ericson pointed out to the Board that Mechanic Street has variable width, from 23' to less than 20' in some areas.

Frank Jacques of 88 Mechanic Street addressed the Board and said he agreed with Mr. Cardello that the subdivision regulations should be followed and with Mr. Ericson that the Town needs a technical review committee. He also complimented the developer, saying that the proposal shows a beautiful, high-caliber development. He also commented that he had many concerns. He is concerned with safety issues, especially with regard to the 14' wide street. He said the development has almost the same number of units proposed as there are currently existing on Mechanic Street. Doubling the traffic will result in safety issues. He asked why the development could not be accessed through Florence Street to the paper street (Linden) which

dead-ends at the property line. This would mean that traffic accessing the development would only have to pass one house, rather than all those on Mechanic Street. Additionally, Florence Street is much wider than Mechanic (28').

Mr. Jacques also stated that the sewer line was approved in 1998 and that residents on Mechanic Street have been paying \$1500 per year for the assessment. He stated that now the cost advantage is with the developer. He added that the pump station cannot support the development, as its capacity can only be expanded by another 12%.

His expressed his wish that the existing farmhouse not be extensively remodeled since it is one of the oldest homes in North Smithfield and he would not want its character changed. Mr. Cardello asked if it is on the historic register, but it is not.

Mr. Jacques' final concern was with regard to drainage. He said that his house is directly across from the drainage from the property to be developed. He stated that on a very rainy day, the water from Florence Street creates a funnel directly to the center of that property and that his basement floods at least two times each year.

Eugene Moorehouse of 36 High View Avenue stated that he has lived on that road for over 60 years and has concerns over the drainage. He asked about the storm deterrent portion of the drainage system and for details on how much water could be handled. He said that

after a hurricane, his neighbor had water over his cellar window and asked how this will be handled. The Chair stated that system and proposed detention basin will be reviewed by DEM and they will determine whether it will handle large storms.

Kevin McCoy of 250 Mechanic Street said that though the plans look nice conceptually, there are too many cars that will be travelling on a substandard street. He said that when the sewer line was installed on Mechanic Street the road did not get repaved. He said that the pump station is sized for the existing houses and there have already been issues with failure. Water runoff from High View Avenue comes to his house and he has had many instances of basement flooding.

Andy Hebert of 20 Mechanic Street stated his concern for traffic safety, particularly at the 5-way intersection at Central Street.

Mr. Cardello asked if the Sewer Commission could be consulted to get their opinion on whether the existing facilities can handle the development.

Mr. Simone asked if a site visit could be scheduled. Mr. Ericson set a date of Saturday, January 16, 2010 at 10:00 am for a site walk, open to the Board and the public.

Mr. Cardello made a motion to continue the hearing to January 21, 2010 at 7:00 pm. Mr. Naylor seconded the motion, with all in favor.

Mr. Cardello made a motion to take a 5-minute recess at 8:56. Mr. Naylor seconded the motion, with all in favor.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 9:04 pm.

5. Rumas: Minor Subdivision Preliminary Plan Application

Owner/Applicant: John Rumas

Location: Buxton Street, Assessor's Plat 1, Lot 420

Zoning: RA-65 (Rural Agricultural)

Marc Nyberg addressed the Board for the applicant. Mr. Ericson stated that the application is very similar to the recent Jarry application, but that no variances are needed. Mr. Nyberg stated that the property is located on the southerly side of Buxton Street, about 500' from the Burrillville line. The property includes the existing dwelling and a garage/office. The proposal is to divide the lot in half, creating a new lot and to update the septic system for the existing house.

Mr. Ericson stated that the 1993 maps will be used for determining the flood plain because the 2009 version is not for this area. Because the 2009 map for this area was not published, by default the 1993 map is current.

Mr. Nyberg stated that there are no wetlands on the property, and

there are only a couple of small areas with grades greater than 20%. He stated that Lot 1 does not meet the 2.5/1 width to length ratio, but Mr. Ericson stated that this is not a requirement.

Mr. Nyberg stated that the septic system has been submitted to DEM. The existing system is being upgraded, with two separate systems being created for the house and the office. A new system will be built for the new house. Frontage requirements are met.

Mr. Cardello asked for the location of the abutter's (Lot 137) well. Mr. Nyberg stated that it has been located and it meets the setback. He will add it to the plans.

Mr. Cardello made a motion to approve the Preliminary Minor Subdivision Plan for John Rumas, dated December 2009, with the condition that the plans be revised to show the location of the well on Lot 137. Mr. Biliouris seconded the motion, with all in favor.

Mr. Nyberg asked that the Final Plan approval be handled administratively. Mr. Cardello made a motion to grant the Final Plan approval administratively since it is not a complicated plan. Mr. Simone seconded the motion, with all in favor.

Mr. Cardello made a motion to adjourn at 9:17 pm. Mr. Biliouris seconded the motion, with all in favor.