

Town of North Smithfield Planning Board

Kendall Dean School, 83 Green Street

Thursday, September 18, 2014, 7:00 PM

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

1. Roll Call: Present: Cynthia Roberts, Scott Lentz, Gene Simone, and Dean Naylor. Also in attendance were Town Planner Robert Ericson and Town Solicitor James Lombardi III.

2. Approval of Minutes: Motion by Scott Lentz to approve the September 4, 2014 minutes. Second by Gene Simone with all in favor (4-0).

3. Disclosure: This is the point where anyone can disclose potential conflicts related to matters before the Board. Each member has the option to recuse under RI ethics regulations or abstain from voting for other reasons. Scott Lentz recused himself from the Dowling Village item because he is currently Secretary of the North Smithfield Land Trust, an abutter to Dowling Village.

4. Preliminary Plan, Major Subdivision: Dowling Village Final Plan Modification

Applicant: Bucci Development, Inc

Location: Dowling Village Blvd

Assessor's Plat 21 Lots 401 & 403

Zoning: Land Development Project (LDP)

Mr. Ericson announced that the agenda item has no quorum and would therefore be continued to the next meeting. He noted that Caroly Shumway and her attorney had raised procedural questions, and that Atty Nicholas Goodier has been so advised.

5. Recommendations to the Zoning Board of Review: Discussion, vote or other action by the Planning Board regarding Town of North Smithfield – Care and Custody of North Smithfield School Committee - on Plat 15 Lot 44. The applicants, Robert E. Lafleur and Stephen F. Lindberg, are seeking a Special Use Permit proposing to park school buses on school property near the North Smithfield Middle School.

Atty Mark Welch represented the applicant Superintendent Steve Lindberg was present with Anthony Kopacz and Robert Mayo from staff. Shirley Gralnick of DATTCO and Tracy Donnelly of RGB were also present.

The proposed parking area between the two schools is the area currently used for student pick-up and drop-off. Mr. Lindberg commented that this overnight parking arrangement is a win-win situation. This would have buses quickly available for early dismissal, emergency situations and sports/field trip use.

Mr. Ericson asked whether running buses from this location would

decrease total emissions in town. Atty Welch said that would be a reasonable conclusion given that the buses will travel fewer miles.

Mr. Lindberg contracted the RI Interlocal Trust to determine what insurances would be needed, and DATTCO then provided the coverage. He added that security cameras mounted on the Middle School cover the area. Mr. Naylor asked about security of the unfenced parking area. Mr. Lindberg replied that DATTCO felt secure with the area, and the Middle School is well lit at night.

Ms. Gralnick testified that some of the 13 buses are 2012 models; the rest are 2015. Buses are not locked, but the door is tight and not easy to open from the outside initially. Some of the drivers stay in the administrative building between shifts. DATTCO will develop a scheduled monitoring plan for the site.

These buses start and go in normal weather and require only five minutes warm-up when temperatures fall to 20 degrees or lower. They do not have the problems that older First Student buses had. Mr. Kopacz testified that there are 419 parking spaces at the two schools and sufficient unused parking spaces in the area for the additional 25-28 employee cars.

For the record, Atty Welch asked Mr. Kopacz to review meetings with the NS Fire Department. He said DATTCO did some test parking, and the NS Fire & Rescue was satisfied that there would be at least a 20'

lane for fire trucks. He noted that there is a security gate between Middle School parking lot and the school bus area.

Mr. Kopacz explained that worst-case warmup would occur before the school heating systems ramp up, and make-up air enters the Middle School at the third floor level front and back. The windows have vents for building air exhaust only.

The School Department provided a site plan. The Board discussed strict conformance to those plans and testimony before the ZBR, with an approval limited to accessory use for education. That would prevent it from ever becoming a tour bus loading area.

Susan Landi of nearby Pomona Street objected to more diesel fumes and noise in the neighborhood. She asked why DATTCO provides only one short bus. Mr. Lindberg said needs change from year to year, but they now need only one. He added that fueling will be done at the Highway Garage on Quaker Highway. Ms. Gralnick said a bus needs to refuel every 2-3 days and holds about 50 gallons.

Mr. Kopacz described the snow plowing plan, and Ms. Gralnick described how snow rakes are used to remove snow from bus roofs.

Mr. Ericson asked about idling time laws - 5 minutes in RI, 3 in Connecticut – and whether DATTCO can test for optimal warm-up time. He noted that buses 2010 and later have significantly lower

emissions. Atty Welch said RI law allows 15minutes at 0-32 degrees. He said DATTCO will work toward minimizing the time actually required.

Paul Soares didn't see enough of a benefit to justify relocating buses to the schools.

Jean Belrose of Pomona St wanted to know why notice was limited to 200' for this zoning change. She doubted that buses could warm up in five minutes. Mr. Ericson replied that 200 feet is the state law, and this is a Special Use Permit application, not a zoning change.

Mr. Lentz asked if a Special Use Permit can be temporary or limited in years. Atty Welch and Mr. Ericson agreed that that was not possible in Rhode Island.

Mr. Naylor asked about future bus needs. Only about 60% of eligible students take buses to school on a given day, so there is more capacity within the 13 buses. DATTCO has the option of asking the School Committee to keep 2012 buses in 2015-16.

Cynthia Roberts moved that "the Planning Board recommends approval of the application with special attention to particulate dispersion, decibel readings and strict conformance to plans and testimony, with restriction to accessory use for education." Gene Simone seconded the motion with Cynthia Roberts, Dean Naylor,

Scott Lentz and Gene Simone in favor (4-0).

The School Department agreed to take decibel readings of bus noise at multiple locations. The DATTCO manager agreed to research dispersal of particulates from diesel exhaust.

6. Planning update: Summary of new developments with the Comprehensive Plan, Invest in NS bond, new commercial and manufacturing projects, planned bridge work, applications in the pipeline, BRV Heritage Corridor projects, energy projects and meetings schedule.

Mr. Ericson explained that the Planning Department is working on updates to the tax/zoning maps. He explained Dowling Village problems beyond what the Valley Breeze article discussed, as well as inherent conflicts between construction and environmental science concepts.

He also explained how Solarize RI will work, and that the Town Council granted tax exemptions for rooftop solar. He explained the future economics of electric power and Saturday's Drive Electric event in Cranston.

Mr. Ericson reviewed the status of Dowling Village construction.

Ms. Roberts passed out information on public health in planning, looking toward a Community Health element in the next Comprehensive Plan.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Simone. Second by Mr. Lentz with all in

favor at 8:12 pm.

Submitted by Robert Ericson on September 23, 2014

Approved by Planning Board on October 2, 2014