

Town of Barre
Planning Commission
March 15, 2023

The Town of Barre Planning Commission held a meeting on Wednesday, March 15, 2023, beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building at 149 Websterville Road, Websterville, VT.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

In person: Cedric Sanborn, Byron Atwood, Mike Gilbar, George Clain and Craig Chase
Absent: Terry Reil

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

In person: Cindy Spaulding

OTHERS PRESENT

In person: Lynn Lamson (applicant) and James Alvarez (VP of CVMC)

Remote: Jason Howard (abutter)

A. CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Sanborn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. CHANGES TO THE PUBLISHED AGENDA?

There were no changes to the agenda.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1) February 15, 2023

On motion by Mr. Gilbar, seconded by Mr. Chase, the Planning Commission approved the minutes of February 15, 2023 as written. Vote 5-0-0.

2) March 7, 2023 Special with Selectboard

On motion by Mr. Clain, seconded by Mr. Gilbar, the Planning Commission approved the minutes of March 7, 2023 Special meeting with Selectboard as written. Vote 4-0-1 (Chase abstained)

D. PUBLIC HEARING

Request by Lynn Lamson for allowed use determination in accordance with Article 2, section 2.4 (c) of the Barre Town Zoning Bylaw, whereas Ms. Lamson is proposing a use not specifically allowed (high-density residential) in an existing building owned by Edward & Margaret Bisson dba: Trow Hill Grocery. The subject parcel is located at 275 Hill Street; parcel ID 033/081.00; zoned high density residential; AUD-23000001.

Staff Report by Cindy Spaulding

This is a warned public hearing to consider a request by Lynn Lamson to seek an allowed determination(AUD) in accordance with the Bare Town Zoning Bylaws, Article 2, Section 2.4 that reads as follows:

(C) Any uses not specifically permitted in any given zone may be considered and allowed if, after review by the Planning Commission in a public hearing, the Planning Commission determines that the use will not alter the characteristics of the area and will not cause an undue burden on the community.

The parcel subject to this request is a .90 acre in size and currently has one structure which is a grocery and single-family dwelling. The parcel is located on Hill Street in a high-density residential zone. The parcel is served by municipal water and sewer.

The applicant has supplied responses to the criteria and provided a short narrative of what she would like to do as a business and occupy the residential dwelling.

Most commercial/retail uses are not allowed in a high-density residential zone by either permitted or conditional use. In this case the building has been a neighborhood grocery store for decades, The applicant is proposing to turn the grocery store into a coffee shop and gift shop with items made by local artisans to display and sell.

Below are the criteria used to help the Planning Commission with its review and decision. The applicant has responded that all items will remain the same. My response is below for each.

1. Emergency services:

The Town of Barre operates a full-time Police and Ambulance Service along with a call-paid Fire Department. Changing the usage from a grocery store to a coffee shop does not impact emergency services. I believe the Town of Barre emergency services has the ability to serve this proposed use.

2. Water, sewer, or other municipal utility systems:

The subject parcel is served by both water and sewer provided by the Town of Barre. The building currently has two sewer units one for the store and one for residential.

The Town of Barre has substantial capacity to serve this property with both water and sewer so it is unlikely regardless of the water consumption would exceed the current use.

3. The character of the area affected as defined by the purpose(s) of the zone within which the project is located, and specifically stated policies and standards of the municipal plan:

The subject parcel is located in a high-density zone. The neighborhood is comprised mainly of single-family dwellings with a few multi-unit dwellings.

4. Traffic on roads and highways in the vicinity:

The subject parcel is located at the corner of Hill Street and West Cobble Hill Road. Traffic flow in this area should not change.

5. Zoning bylaws and bylaws then in effect:

As noted, Barre Town’s Zoning Bylaw doesn’t allow the proposed use either by permitted or conditional, use. However, after review by the Planning Commission during a warned public hearing, in accordance with Article 2, sec. 2.4 (c), it is determined that the use will not “alter the characteristics of the area and will not cause an undue burden on the community”, the use can be allowed and would be conforming.

6. The impact on neighboring uses:

There should not be a change in impact to the neighborhood.

7. Minimum lot size:

The minimum lot size for high-density residential is 1/3 acre with municipal water and sewer. The subject parcel is .9 acres which conforms with the minimum lot size.

8. Off-street parking requirements in accordance with standards outlined in Article 3, Sec. 3.9 of this bylaw:

The current parking lot has ample parking for this new usage, it may need to be updated to include ADA compliance parking space. The applicant has not mentioned if there will be lighting in the parking lot.

9. Loading/unloading facilities:

No formal loading or unloading docks etc. currently exists.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

After reviewing all the criterion above not one shows any real concern that the proposed coffee & gift shop would alter the characteristics of the area or cause an undue burden on the community. The applicant’s narrative to convert the grocery store to a coffee/gift shop with a deli and ice-cream window and seating of 12-15 patrons would only enhance the neighborhood and bring more visitors to town. It is recommended to approve with conditions:

1. The applicant should consult with a Vermont Permit specialist to determine what if any other State permit are necessary.
2. A change of use permit will be required.
3. Any other conditions the Commission would like to add.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Mr. Gilbar recused himself from participating in the public hearing and removed himself as an acting member of the Planning Commission.

On motion by Mr. Clain, second by Mr. Chase, the Planning Commission opened the public hearing. Vote 4-0-0.

Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of her staff report stated above. Ms. Lamson explained her plan was to convert the Trow Hill Grocery into a coffee & gift shop with a deli and ice cream with seating for up to

Questions/Answers

Sanborn asked, what are the hours of operation?

Lamson stated the hours would be 9 to 5 or 6 p.m. and the days of week will be determined.

Atwood asked if there would be any outside seating.

Lamson stated there will be no outside seating.

Clain stated area will be saturated when the ice cream service window is open.

Josh Howard abutting property owner expressed his concerns for trash flying on his property, the trash dumpster overflowing and vehicles blocking the drive way to the property behind the store. Ms. Lamson will work with Mr. Howard to resolve his concerns.

On motion by Mr. Clain, seconded by Mr. Atwood, the Planning Commission closed the public hearing. Vote 4-0-0.

On motion by Mr. Atwood, seconded by Mr. Clain, the Planning Commission approved a request by Lynn Lamson for allowed use determination in accordance with Article 2, section 2.4 (c) of the Barre Town Zoning Bylaw, whereas Ms. Lamson is proposing a use not specifically allowed (high-density residential) in an existing building owned by Edward & Margaret Bisson dba: Trow Hill Grocery. The subject parcel is located at 275 Hill Street; parcel ID 033/081.00; zoned high density residential; AUD-23000001. Contingent the following conditions: 1. The applicant should consult with a Vermont Permit specialist to determine what if any other State permit are necessary. 2. A change of use permit will be required. Vote 4-0-0.

Mr. Gilbar returned to the meeting as a member of the Planning Commission.

E. NON-AGENDA ITEMS (PUBLIC COMMENT) –Moved to E

Mr. James Alvarez, Vice President of Central Vermont Medical Center came before the Planning Commission to get members' ideas for potential housing developments. Mr. Alvarez explained that CVMC is having difficulties retaining staff since there is such a shortage in the housing inventory throughout Central Vermont. He gave examples where CVMC has been working with a developer in other towns for housing. The issue is the demand for housing exceeds the current market. CVMC needs about 200 units to recruit and retain medical professionals. Discussion ensued regarding potential areas for development and partnerships with developers and investors.

F. NEW BUSINESS

Joint letter with Selectboard for S.100

Mr. Sanborn explained that the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy were taking testimony on S.100 Wednesday morning. Therefore, he asked Mr. Violette send the joint letter as is. The bill is being revised in the Natural Resource and Energy Committee. Mr. Sanborn stated they are still working on setting up a meeting with the Governor to discuss the town's concerns.

G. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE AND BILL REVIEW – Tabled to April meeting.

H. OLD BUSINESS

- 1) Continue discussion about the possible formation of an Energy Committee –

Members reviewed draft recommendation for the formation of an Energy Committee to the Selectboard. Mr. Clain asked for clarification of municipal energy usage, is that town wide or municipal infrastructures. It was suggested to state in the letter to the Selectboard Chair White:

Track municipal energy usage, identify opportunities, and develop strategies to improve energy efficiency in municipal facilities.

On motion by Mr. Chase, second by Mr. Gilbar, the Planning Commission approved the Recommendation for Formation of an Energy Commission and to present it to the Selectboard at a future meeting. Vote 5-0-0.

- 2) Continue discussion about whether to pursue village center designation.

On motion by Mr. Clain, second by Mr. Gilbar, the Planning Commission approved continued discussion to pursue village center designation. Vote 5-0-0.

I. FOLLOW-UP

- 1) Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission report

The following was reported by Mr. Clain and Mr. Gilbar

- Waterbury did not support S.100.
- Gilbar is on the Nominating committee.
- The CEDS document was approved by the CVRPC.
- It was recommended that a representative from the Planning Commission be on the Regional Planning Commission Board when Mr. Gilbar has vacated his seat in May.

J. ROUND TABLE

- 1) VLCT's weekly legislative update –

This subject is tabled to April meeting to discuss bills that have crossed over in legislature. Mr. Gilbar would like to discuss S.5 further.

K. ADJOURN

On motion by Mr. Clain, second by Mr. Gilbar, the Planning Commission adjourned at 9:00 p.m. Vote 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Spaulding, Clerk

Cedric Sanborn, Chair

Mike Gilbar

George Clain

Byron Atwood

Chris Violette

Craig Chase

Terry Reil

DRAFT