

Town of Barre Planning Commission November 15, 2023

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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

In person: Cedric Sanborn, George Clain, Craig Chase, Byron Atwood, Terry Reil, Alice Farrell, and Rodney Morin

STAFF PRESENT:

Brandon Garbacik

Remote: Chris Violette

PUBLIC ATTENDEES:

Pierre Couture (7:07 P.M.)

A. CALL TO ORDER – 7:01 P.M.

B. CHANGES TO THE PUBLISHED AGENDA

The approval of last month's meeting minutes were tabled, with the plan on adding it to the following month's agenda. This was because that the document that will be included in the Barre Town Land Records (including the signature page signed by the members of the Planning Commission) was not printed out prior to the meeting. (This was brought back up during item J: Round Table)

Also, Mr. Garbacik asked the Chair to add a third item to item I: Follow-up. This was an update on the formation of an Energy Committee. The Chair approved both of these changes to the agenda.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 1) **October 18, 2023** – Tabled; later brought back up and approved during item J (Round Table)

On a motion by Mr. Clain, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Planning Commission approved the minutes of October 18, 2023 meeting as written. Vote 7-0-0

D. NON-AGENDA ITEMS (PUBLIC COMMENT): None

E. WARNED PUBLIC HEARING(S): None

F. NEW BUSINESS – (Sequence of items changed due to guest attendance)

- 4) **Discussion about residences located within the industrial zone.**

Mr. Garbacik reported that a number of homeowners and potential homebuyers of properties located within the industrial zone have concerns over the industrial zone's setback requirements. He discussed two potential solutions to address these concerns. One idea is to re-zone each of the properties with residential uses in the industrial zone to a residential zone (very high density residential). The other idea was to introduce a different set of lot standards to any parcel in the industrial zone with an existing residential use.

The consensus from the commission was that the optimal solution is to introduce a different set of lot standards to the residential uses in the industrial zone. For one, the commission was wary of implementing anything that could be construed as "spot zoning." Another concern was not wanting to re-zone any portion of land in the industrial zone that could potentially have a future industrial use to it. A third concern about re-zoning is that it is a complicated and difficult process.

The Zoning Bylaw will need to be updated in the near future to comply with Act 47. It was agreed that

introducing a new set of lot standards for the residential uses in the industrial zone can be done during the bylaw update process.

2) Conceptual discussion with Pierre Couture to discuss a potential Allowed Use Determination for a museum. Property owned by Rock of Ages; Zoned Earth Resource Extraction; Parcel ID: 002/004.00

Mr. Pierre Couture (RockFire Inc.) was in attendance to talk about a potential project on property owned by Rock of Ages near the Grand Lookout and the old Wetmore plant (off of Church Hill Rd). In this first of two discussions with Mr. Couture in this meeting, this was a conceptual discussion for an Allowed Use Determination (AUD) for the use of a museum in a zone where this is not an allowed use (Earth Resource Extraction zone). The proposed project involves an indoor and an outdoor component. The outdoor component would feature a sculpture park and remembrance garden. The indoor component would be a museum/welcome center for the sculpture park. The project would pay homage to Barre's history of integrating different cultures together. This operation would be maintained by RockFire Inc, who would lease this tract of land from Rock of Ages.

The commission did not see any concerns with the project overall. However, they iterated that Rock of Ages' approval must be obtained in order to proceed with a formal application.

3) Conceptual discussion with Pierre Couture to discuss a potential Allowed Use Determination for outdoor recreational services. Property owned by Rock of Ages; Zoned Industrial and Earth Resource Extraction; Parcel ID: 002/001.00

In the other of two discussions with Mr. Couture, this was a conceptual discussion for an AUD for the use of outdoor recreational services in zones where this is not an allowed use (Industrial and Earth Resource Extraction zones). The proposed project is modeled off an existing tourist attraction in Coaticook, Quebec called *Foresta Lumina*. It is a lighted forest walk attraction that is very commercially successful. Also, there would be plans for a giant puppet show to take place at this venue. These performances would take place at night on property owned by Rock of Ages (off of Graniteville Rd). Mr. Couture described the proposal as an "immersive experience." The former Rock of Ages Visitor Center on (upper) Graniteville Rd would be renovated as the welcome/parking area for this venue.

The commission's top concerns mentioned with this project involve the noise of amplified music, lighting from the light show, event security, sufficient parking spaces, and high volumes of traffic traveling in residential areas late at night. They recommended to Mr. Couture that if he would like to proceed with a formal application for this project, he will need to present a robust proposal to satisfy nearby homeowners.

1) Conceptual discussion with Lucas John to discuss a potential re-zone of property located at 217 & 223 Church Hill Rd. Property owned by Lucas John; Zoned Industrial; Parcel ID: 002/007.00

Mr. Lucas John was not in attendance to speak about his conceptual request. However, Mr. Garbacik summarized the conversation that he had with Mr. John regarding re-zoning his property. He stated that Mr. John was interested in re-zoning his property because he didn't feel that it meets the definition of the industrial zone. Also, Mr. John was interested in saving some money in taxes and insurance, so he wants to subdivide his property so that his residence and his MMA studio are on separate parcels (right now they are on the same parcel).

Mr. Garbacik confirmed that the property would need to be re-zoned in order for a subdivision to be possible at this location. Since the property is zoned industrial (minimum lot size 2.0 acres, minimum road frontage 200', etc.), the subject parcel (1.8 acres, approximately 300' of road frontage) would be unable to create conforming subdivided lots. However, the subject parcel could create conforming subdivided lots if it were re-zoned. Mr. John's request is to re-zone his property to very high density residential, matching the nearest residential zone to his property (less than 200 feet away). Since Mr. John was not in attendance, there was no discussion regarding what next steps he should take if he decides to pursue this further.

G. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE AND BILL REVIEW: None

H. OLD BUSINESS: None

I. FOLLOW-UP

1) Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission report

Mrs. Farrell announced that CVRPC had a meeting to renominate members to different committees, and that she will be representing on the Brownfields Committee.

2) Update on Village Center Designation application

Mr. Garbacik drafted a memo for the PC to review, edit (as needed), and send to the Selectboard. The purpose of the memo is to recommend to the Selectboard that they authorize the town to apply for Village Center Designation for the villages of East Barre, South Barre, Lower Graniteville, and Upper Websterville. The commission agreed that the drafted memo was sufficient.

On a motion by Mr. Clain, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Planning Commission approved to have the Chair of the Planning Commission sign a letter to the Selectboard formally recommending them to authorize the applications for Village Center Designation in the villages of East Barre, South Barre, Lower Graniteville, and Upper Websterville. (Vote 7-0-0)

Also, Brian Voigt, Senior Planner for CVRPC, will be attending next month's meeting to discuss mapping the boundaries of the proposed village centers. It was discussed that Mr. Garbacik can help prepare these boundaries for Mr. Voigt ahead of next month's meeting.

3) Update on formation of Energy Committee

At their meeting on Tuesday, November 14, 2023, the Barre Town Selectboard voted to approve the formation of a town Energy Committee. Following the approval to form this committee, some follow-up questions were discussed, including:

- Who from the Planning Commission would join the Energy Committee? The approved charge mentions that 1-2 Planning Commission members shall serve on the Energy Committee.
- Where will grant writing for any potential grants come from?
- What sorts of grants are available?

J. ROUND TABLE

Items discussed during this section include:

- **Chase:** Am I allowed to speak to Rock of Ages employee regarding implications of his employer going through Act 250 process? **Garbacik:** Yes, everything discussed in the conceptual discussion tonight is public information.
- **Next month:** Re-zone request on property located off of Tanglewood Drive.
- **Violette:** Initial re-zone request meeting is not a public hearing.
- **Act 47:** Dictates only some lot standards such as residential density requirements, but not other lot standards such as road frontage, access to parcels, etc.
- **Clain:** Can we approve last month's meeting minutes without page to sign? (See Item C: Agenda)
- **Morin:** What does Act 47 mention about senior housing?
- **Morin:** Has the PC looked into Federal Opportunity Zones?

Respectfully submitted,

Brandon Garbacik, Planning Officer

Cedric Sanborn, Chair

Alice Farrell

George Clain

Byron Atwood

Terry Reil

Craig Chase

Rodney Morin

DRAFT