



PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Monday October 22, 2018 7:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall

MINUTES

Approved 11/26/2018

I. Roll Call

Present: Allen Damren, Marlene Boisclair, Bruce Kolenda, Charlene Lovett, Richard Wahrlich, David Pacetti

Absent: William Greenrose, Nick Koloski, David Putnam

City Staff: Michael McCrory, City Planner

II. Review of Minutes

A. 10/8/2018

Motion: To approve

Made by: Mr. Damren **Second:** Mayor Lovett

Mayor Lovett asked that her name be added to the list of Planning Board members who participated in the public outreach at the Chili Cook-Off.

Vote: Unanimous in favor

III. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

IV. New Business

- A. **(PL 2018-00008) Peraza Dermatology, 252 Broad Street** – application for site plan review for creation of a staff parking area at **25 Chestnut Street**. Tax Map 132, Lot 62. Zoning District: CR2.

Planner's Report

Mr. McCrory said the application is for a proposed parking lot in a residential district. The parking lot is to be located on a parcel with an abandoned house on it. The Peraza Dermatology Group purchased the property to provide much needed staff parking.

Mr. McCrory said he considered the application to be complete.

Motion: To accept the application as complete

Made by: Mayor Lovett **Second:** Mr. Putnam

Vote: Unanimous in favor

Mr. McCrory said the proposed use is not permitted in the zoning district in which it is located. The applicant will be applying to the Zoning Board for a variance. He asked the Board to focus on the site layout, design, etc. as though the variance had been granted.

Mr. McCrory pointed out that there would be one-way traffic circulation through the lot and angled parking. There will be some storm water collection and on-site infiltration (test pits revealed sandy soil like most of the downtown). 5-ft tall solar pedestal lights will be provided for illumination of the parking spaces. The lot is intended for private use by the Dermatology Group. It is not intended to be used by the public.

Split rail fencing will be used to demarcate the edge of the parking area. The lot has been designed to retain as much of the existing vegetation and mature trees as possible. (There is a cluster of cedar trees and some fairly mature butternut and maple trees.)

The City will be partnering with this project to install a rain garden between the parking area and the edge of Cossitt Avenue. The City is looking for a suitable area to try this innovative concept.

Applicant's Presentation

Wayne McCutcheon presented the application. Based on test pit data obtained by Randy Rhoades at M & W Soils, there will be a dry well installed in the middle of the parking lot for drainage. This will receive most of the storm water – the remainder will be directed toward the rain garden.

The house will be removed, the foundation filled in and the site graded and seeded. Mature trees will not be removed. Solar lighting fixtures will be installed - one at each end of the island. The office hours are 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM. There is a sidewalk on the opposite side of Cossitt that leads to the corner of Cossitt and Broad. The City cannot plow it as it is too narrow for their plow. This parking lot is intended to serve the staff at the office and for overflow patient parking. (There are 20 employees in the office.)

The Board expressed concern about the sidewalk not being plowed and people having to walk in the street. Norm Sandville, caretaker of the Peraza property, said he has kept the sidewalk near the office clean in the winter and he would clear the sidewalk to the parking lot as long as the City is unable to.

The question was raised regarding other people using the lot (not staff or patients). Mr. McCutcheon said the lot would be posted as being private. He said the existing parking lot is often used after hours by people using the rail trail and expected that the same would happen with this lot. Mr. Sandville said this arrangement has not been a problem and expected it would not be a problem for the new lot either.

Mayor Lovett asked why this application had not gone to the Zoning Board first. Mr. McCutcheon said he missed the deadline for the October Zoning Board meeting. He said he understood that the Planning Board's approval for the site plan would have to be contingent on the Zoning Board approving the variance.

Mayor Lovett asked if allowing a parking lot in a residential neighborhood would go against the master plan with regard to keeping residential neighborhoods intact.

Mr. Wahrlich asked for an abutters' roll call, after which he opened the public hearing.

Karen Duford, abutter at 15 Chestnut, read from a prepared statement. Ms. Duford spoke about the deterioration of the house on the lot and how it became an eyesore and public nuisance over time. She strongly supported the project as it would improve the condition of the lot. She also supported the project on the grounds that without it, on-street parking will continue to cause a traffic and pedestrian hazard on Cossitt. She urged the Board to approve the site plan.

Mr. McCrory read a letter from Ardon Roark, abutter at 33 Chestnut Street. Mr. Roark said he trusted that there would be limited use of the lot and "keeping the area residential in character". He also asked if the lot "would still be available as a home site".

Mayor Lovett asked if the design of the lot could be modified to facilitate a possible house site in the future. Mr. McCrory said it could be a possibility.

Mr. Wahrlich closed the public forum.

Board Discussion

Mr. Putnam recommended sharing these letters with the Zoning Board. Mr. Damren said there needed to be a condition that the plan is approved conditioned upon receipt of the variance from the Zoning Board.

Motion: To approve this application as presented with the following conditions:

1. The Proposed Site Plan shall be completed in accordance with the information provided by the applicant in the Site Plan Application Case No. PL 2018-00008 and testimony during the public hearing for said case.
2. The site shall be constructed and maintained in accordance with the plan titled, "Site Plan Prepared for Peraza Dermatology Group, 25 Chestnut Street, Claremont, New Hampshire" dated September 28, 2018 and as amended.

3. The applicant shall obtain all necessary permits as determined by the Local, State, and Federal governments. This site plan approval is conditioned upon approval of a variance from the Zoning Board.
4. On-site directional signage is allowed. No signage is permitted for off-site commercial properties or advertisement.
5. The owner and applicant shall make every reasonable effort to cooperate with the City and its partners in the design and installation of a raingarden along the site's Cossitt Ave frontage.
6. The abandoned structure on the property shall be demolished in accordance with local codes and standards.
7. The owner shall make every reasonable effort to maintain existing and proposed vegetation on the site. Should trees or shrubbery die or need to be removed for any reason, then the owner shall replace the vegetation with landscape nursery stock of the same species and in the same approximate location within six months.
8. Upon completion of construction the owner/applicant shall notify the Zoning Administrator and Building Inspector that the project is ready for final inspection. If Planning and Development Department staff determine there are substantial changes to the site development, then the applicant shall submit for Site Plan Amendment.
9. This Site Plans is valid for two (2) years from the date of approval. If a no action is taken to exercise this Site Plan approval before the two-year deadline, the site plan is no longer valid and must be recertified through the Planning Board.
10. Two (2) copies of the final approved overall Site Plan, printed on mylar and in a form suitable for recording at the Sullivan County Registry of Deeds, shall be provided to the Claremont Planning and Development Department within six (6) months of this approval.

Made by: Mr. Putnam **Second:** Mr. Kolenda

It was agreed to change the wording of condition #7, "owner shall replace the vegetation with landscape nursery stock of *the same species*" to read, "owner shall replace the vegetation with landscape nursery stock of *similar type*" because of the difficulty of replacing butternut trees.

Mayor Lovett asked if a condition should be added that would restrict the use of the lot to the Peraza staff and patients only, on the grounds that it would protect the neighborhood from increased traffic. It was ultimately decided not to add the condition.

Vote on the motion: 5 in favor, 2 opposed. Motion passed.

The Board continued to discuss the matter after the applicant and public had left the chambers.

Mr. McCrory said how the parking lot is used gets into a grey area between site plan and zoning. Mr. Wahrlich felt people should be able to retain some control over their land. He said if there are too many people using the lot, the owners could change their signage and start calling tow trucks.

It was agreed that allowing trail users to park there is not what was presented in the application.

Testimony and discussion during the meeting clarified that the lot would be used principally by staff and patients, but may be used after hours and on holidays with no objections from the Perazas.

Mr. McCrory said there is a zoning change half way down Cossit – the dermatology office is in the PR district, while the parking lot would be in the CR2 zone.

Mayor Lovett asked if the Board should be discussing expanding the tax base?

Mr. McCrory said to try to envision the highest and best use of property and promote that, but it would be a lawsuit waiting to happen if the Board denied a use on the grounds that something better could be there; make it attractive and the market will find a way; do what you can to set the ground work - then be patient and hope for the best.

Mr. Putnam said that since the master plan is not regulatory, how careful should the Board be in referring to it? Mr. McCrory said to be careful of relying just on the master plan. There must be additional evidence to support decisions.

V. Reports from Boards and Commissions

There were no reports.

VI. Other

A. Update on Housing Initiative

Mr. McCrory said he had received the outreach plan. He read the list of survey questions that will be used. He said RPC will be at a listening session at the senior center tomorrow and on Saturday at the VRH wellness fair. He asked for volunteers to sit with the RPC staff.

November 23rd – the “Santa is coming to town” event will be at Broad Street Park. There will be a wide variety of people attending. Outreach volunteers can engage people waiting in line to talk to Santa. Surveys will be distributed through social media, on list serves, and as handouts at local businesses. There will also be employer surveys and focus groups.

Mr. Putnam said the project still needs a purpose statement. Mr. McCrory said he would bring that up with RPC tomorrow.

Planner’s Farewell

Mr. McCrory announced that this was his last meeting with the Planning Board. He is leaving the City and going on to a new career. The Board thanked Mr. McCrory, saying they had learned a lot from him and that he would be greatly missed.

VII. Correspondence

VIII. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

Made by: Mayor Lovett **Second:** Mr. Damren

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
deForest Bearse
Resource Coordinator