



Planning Board Meeting
Monday, December 12, 2016 7:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall

MINUTES
Approved 1/9/2017

I. Roll Call

Present: Richard Wahrlich, Bruce Kolenda, James Short, Charlene Lovett, Victor Bergeron, David Putnam

Absent: Marilyn Harris, William Greenrose, Nicholas Koloski, Marlene Jordan, Rois Neil Ward, Jr.

City Staff: Michael McCrory, City Planner

II. Review of Minutes – 11/28/2016

Corrections: Mayor Lovett asked to have a sentence on page 4 changed: “She wanted the board to consider **that** having public transportation **as is** part of the Master Plan.”

It was also asked to have the next sentence following the above amended sentence deleted.

Motion: To accept the minutes as corrected.

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

Mayor Lovett said that she had stated at the last meeting that parking on the lawn is prohibited by City Ordinance. She said she checked and there is no such ordinance.

III. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

IV. New Business

- a. Review and comment on a proposed governmental use in a private commercial building including offices and a 26-bed transitional housing facility to be operated by Sullivan County, 169 Main Street (Map 107, Lot 37)

Mr. Wahrlich introduced the case by reading the public notice.

Planner’s Report

Mr. McCrory drew the board’s attention to several documents the board had received pertaining to this project. He said the private building is existing and occupied by a number of tenants. It has traditionally been used for light industrial, industrial, and commercial uses. This proposal is for the refurbishing of the second floor for transitional housing. He said the “baseline, mixed use is allowed in this district”. In accordance with RSA 674:54, “the County’s proposed use” (housing and

ancillary offices) “is governmental in nature and therefore exempt from local land use regulation.” (J. Levine, 11/30/2016)

Staff has given this proposal a lot of consideration, including full staff review with fire, police, building code, planning, and legal. Conversations with the County will be ongoing. The proposal is exempt from zoning, but not from building and life safety codes.

Applicant’s Presentation

David Berry, Superintendent of the Sullivan County Department of Corrections, addressed the board. Mr. Berry said he is seeking feedback and support for this “sober housing” project which will help inmates complete the critically important aftercare program following their release from prison. They are proposing housing for 16 men and 8 women and their recovery coaches. Clinicians and case managers will have offices in the building. There will be regular visits from community corrections officers. Residents will sign a performance contract, pay rent, and be supervised by the staff, and NH probation and parole. Mr. Berry stressed that these people are already in Claremont, but living in situations that are not helpful for their recovery. The County will manage and staff the housing, which they hope will “reduce or eliminate any impact that this population has on City services and not detract from the neighborhood.” The building will remain in private ownership with the County paying rent for the space.

Mr. Bergeron asked, “Why Claremont?” and what impact will this have on City services. Mr. Berry replied that there will hopefully be no impact. He said Claremont was chosen because the relationship is already established with the Hope for NH Recovery Center. There is a community corrections officer already in the community. He works at the Hope center 24 hours a week, funded by a grant. The services are in Claremont already.

Mr. Putnam asked how this project will be an improvement over the services that are already being provided now. Mr. Berry said it’s the adequate housing piece, plus easy access to the services they need.

Residents will stay in the facility for 6 – 12 months. It is difficult to say whether the residents will stay in Claremont after they complete their residency. This program is new in the state of New Hampshire.

Adam Lornitzo from Banwell Architects said this project is primarily interior fit-up work. There are currently three entrances to the building – Hope, SAU 6 All for One, and a new entrance for the stair tower and elevator (for access to the 2nd and 3rd floors). The ramp and entry on the back of the building will be redone – that will allow entrance to the women’s dorm. The 2nd floor will be configured to make the men’s dorm and the women’s dorm separate.

Historic District Commission approval is not needed for interior changes to the building. As the project develops further, there will improvements to the signage.

Most of the tenants do not have driver's licenses (they will be using public transportation), so they do not feel there will be any need to increase the existing parking provisions.

Mr. Putnam asked if a designated bus pick-up area could be developed on the property. Mr. Lornitzo said it might be beneficial, but he didn't know if the bus actually stops at this property. He said they are looking into providing a space for tenants to congregate outside that is not in the public space.

Mr. Lornitzo explained the floor plan for the 2nd floor (dorms) and the 3rd floor (offices).

Mayor Lovett asked if the recovery coaches will be onsite at all times. Mr. Lornitzo said the coaches or the corrections officer will be onsite at all times.

The board had no more questions.

Mr. Wahrlich asked if there was an abutters list. Mr. McCrory said that this was not a public hearing so notifying abutters was not required. However, the County had sent letters to all of the abutting landowners themselves as a courtesy.

Mr. Wahrlich asked if anyone present wished to speak. No one asked to speak.

Mr. Kolenda asked what type offenses the tenants have committed. Mr. Berry said they are offenses related to substance abuse. Tenant will have been sober for over eight months and have completed a program. He stressed that these are people already living in Claremont with an ankle bracelet. They are just trying to put them all in one place to provide a higher level of supervision and offer them more services "around the clock".

Liz Henning from the Public Health Network confirmed the value of the program in reducing recidivism.

Mr. Berry said that the community corrections officer will continue to be employed even after the grant funds run out.

Only 30% of this population has a driver's license. Other people generally provide them with transportation – significant others, family, friends, etc.

All of the residents will have jobs when they become residents at this facility. The program works hard to get the people educated so they can obtain and keep jobs.

Mr. Berry summarized the program by saying it is a "big-picture" project, because by helping each individual, it helps families as well.

The board discussed writing a letter of support for the project. Mayor Lovett asked for a timeline and if the board could receive an update on how things are going once it's up and running.

Mr. Berry said (as to timeline) they are still in the grant process. It could be a year (or more) before the doors are opened (if the grant application is successful).

The consensus of the board was to write a letter supporting the project and requesting a designated outdoor congregating area.

V. Reports from Boards and Commissions

Mr. Putnam said the Master Plan Steering Committee is continuing to review the draft chapters and will soon have two chapters to submit to the planning board for review.

Mr. Wahrlich said the CIP review process has begun and said anyone interested in participating is more than welcome. Mr. McCrory said the plan is to get the first draft to the board by the 2nd meeting in January.

Mayor Lovett said she was interested in participating and asked to be notified of the next meeting.

VI. Other

Mr. McCrory read his draft letter to the Council regarding the bus services. The board discussed the contents with Mr. McCrory.

Motion: To approve the letter as written excluding the last paragraph.

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

VII. Correspondence

The board received a copy of an expedited wetlands permit application for a culvert replacement on Redwater Brook.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

deForest Bearse

Resource Coordinator