



PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Monday, March 26, 2018 7:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall

MINUTES Approved 4/9/2018

I. Roll Call

Present: David Putnam, Bruce Kolenda, Marlene Jordan, Charlene Lovett, Richard Wahrlich, Marilyn Harris, Allen Damren, William Greenrose

Absent: Nick Koloski, James Short

City Staff: Michael McCrory, City Planner

II. Review of Minutes

A. March 12, 2018

Motion: To approve as presented

Made by: Mr. Putnam **Second:** Ms. Jordan

Mayor Lovett asked to have the words, "*as cited in Chapter 11 of the current Master Plan*" on page 5 following the words, Mayor Lovett's approach:"

Vote: Mr. Damren abstained; all others voted in favor

III. Old Business

A. CIP – final review and adoption

It was agreed to move this item to later in the agenda.

IV. New Business

- V. **(PB 2018-00003) Crews Holding LLC, Bedford NH:** Application for a conditional use permit for a transitional teen rooming house at **169 Main Street**. Tax Map 107, Lot 37. Zoning District: MU

Mr. Wahrlich read the public notice.

Planner's Report

Mr. McCrory said a Conditional Use permit is required because the project is for residential use on the ground floor of a building in the mixed-use district. Rooming houses are a permitted use in this district. The Board will need to find that the use fits well in the building and in the context of the neighborhood.

Mr. McCrory has been working regularly with Alan Croteau, property manager for this building, and has encouraged him to submit a site plan for full use of the property. (This is in the recommended conditions of approval for the permit if the Board approves it.)

The application contains a narrative, a floor plan and a diagram of where the project will be in the building. Mr. McCrory said the application meets the basic requirements for a Conditional Use permit application.

Mr. Putnam said the City Center Project was not supportive of first floor residential. He felt the Board should be careful not to set a precedent with this.

Mr. McCrory said the ordinance makes provisions for residential uses on the ground floor of buildings that are outside the immediate city center. The intent was to preserve the commercial storefronts - those that rely on curbside appeal. This building is outside the immediate city center and has never housed commercial uses – it was originally built for industrial use and later converted to office space. He asked does this site have that curb side appeal? Will this project change the character of the building in this neighborhood?

Mr. McCrory recommended finding the application as complete.

Motion: To find the application as complete

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

Applicant's Presentation

The application was presented by Trinity Dix from Claremont Learning Partnership, Alan Croteau, and Cathy Pellerin.

Ms. Dix said they are aiming to use this space for transitional housing for homeless youth, ages 16-22. This is a population in Claremont that is “couch-surfing”, sleeping in the woods, etc. A safe housing environment and supports would be offered. Preference will be given to homeless youth that have dependent children of their own; young women who have been kicked out of their homes for keeping their children, but who wish to continue with their education and job training.

With six rooms they may have anywhere from 4-12 residents depending on the configuration of the youth that are there. There will be an on-site overnight manager, because minors, young children and infants will be present.

The Claremont Learning Partnership will oversee the programmatic financial responsibilities throughout this project.

Ms. Dix linked the project to the Public Health chapter of Claremont's Master Plan where it states that the City would support opportunities for community awareness about the impact of poverty and stress on childhood development. She said they were hoping to accomplish two things at once with these young moms and their children - trying to stop the impacts of poverty from living in insecure places; providing them with workforce opportunities (training, completing their education) all at this site.

Also through the Claremont Master Plan it was noted that achieving public health outcomes requires a systematic approach, concluding that community health is collectively a community responsibility, with the municipal government acting as a partner with healthcare, educational institutions, service organizations, businesses and residents.

Ms. Dix said they want to start small. They are partnering with local non-profits. They are grant writing and have private donors that are putting forth some significant amounts of money to make this a reality.

They are currently applying for a DHHS transitional living program expansion grant. Part of the reason they are applying for this permit is that behind this grant program are hundreds of thousands of dollars that we can apply to this space to the support of services that back up education, job training, healthcare that these youths are often not receiving, mental health supports, future planning and goal setting. Having a site identified and ready to go is key to receiving the grant funds.

Ms. Dix called for questions from the Board.

Mayor Lovett: "I like the idea. I am just concerned that due diligence has been in communicating with other stakeholders in the community who deal with these issues. And the reason why I say that is because I don't think it is in the community's best interest to approach these situations in pieces, because some of the issues I know we have at the shelter ties into some of these issues you are trying to address. I would prefer to see a more wholistic approach. I don't know what's been done along those lines."

Ms. Dix said, "This conversation started quite a while ago and through the work that we are doing currently and some of the other work – connecting with Southwestern Community Services – then identifying the need that we do not have space or room for 16 - and 17- year olds. Often times we will take 18 year olds if there is space, but is the shelter per say the place for an 18-year old to be living with their infant in an elderly population. Linking up with counseling associates and West Central Behavioral Health and addressing their mental health needs because many of these children have mental health/behavioral issues that haven't been addressed because they are coming from lives where poverty has been an issue. They have approached New Hampshire JAG, which is actually on site, and they are more than willing to help with residents to complete their schooling, skills/job training, getting the residents internships and the skills they will need to become part of the work force. We are also working with the University of New Hampshire through the institute on Disabilities to look at some programming called renew training which is about goal-setting and future planning and building a program around that to improve chances for success. Turning Points Network will work with the residents to address issues of sexual abuse and domestic violence."

At the state level, they are working with DHHS with the Bureau of Homelessness and Housing Services which has three main groups – Nashua, Manchester, with the rest of the state assigned to one woman. She recognized the fact that there is not a youth housing facility in this area. She asked them to share in what this would look like, in

developing state plans with Claremont as a potential site – going through this process so these kids aren't falling through the cracks. This links them to the state system.

They are doing a lot at all levels – local City, will pull in County when it makes sense, the state-wide level and national level through the funding they are seeking.

Mayor Lovett: “So if it's focused for teens, why are you saying 16 – 22?”

Ms. Dix: “Some of these teens have not had housing and have not had the opportunity to build the skills that they need. So, we want to be supportive in that. We don't want to kick them out once they turn 18 if they don't have the skills to work, if they haven't completed their education, or they need a little bit more help transitioning and that's exactly what we're there to do. We see it more as that lower age bracket, but we're not going to automatically kick someone out if they're just getting ready to pull everything together.”

Mr. Putnam said that makes sense because the public school is obligated to educate a child up until the age of 21. He said he liked the idea that they are willing to work with teen pregnancy issues. “We have a serious problem with readiness for kindergarten. If we can focus on saving one at a time we can make a difference.”

Ms. Dix said they can provide parenting skills to young parents who may never have had such skills modeled for them. Hopefully with the wide array of services they will provide, it will help break the cycle with the young children of these residents.

Ms. Pellerin: “This site is directly beside the One for All childcare center, which was designed and licensed as a childcare facility just for our high school students. That's right through the door. Two separate entities, but working together.”

Ms. Dix: “In addition to One for All and JAG, WIC is there, Baby Steps, United Way – so there is a multitude of partners there, making it easier to help these residents.”

Mayor Lovett: “You're thinking of six bedrooms at this point in time? Given the need that I think I hear you saying, what is the intent as far as growth?”

Ms. Dix: “Right now we want to start small, and nail it. If money and time allow, maybe then we would look at expanding. But right now, we want to keep it small and aim for that ‘one child at a time’ transformation. We're not looking to eradicate homelessness here within the next two years.”

Mr. Greenrose asked how big is the population of children in need that you are looking to serve? How sustainable will this be given that it is grant/donor dependent? Ms. Dix said there are presently 131 homeless school-age children in Claremont, 29 of whom are between 16 and 19 years of age, some with children of their own. The Federal funding is for 3 years that gets renewed consistently; this program has been shown to work. They will share costs with the collaborating groups; it is a mixed and blended funding stream; each group gives a little to make it possible, making it sustainable.

At present they do not have a formalized master plan - they want to do this first and do it well. It will be at least five years before they look to expand either here or elsewhere.

They will give priority to Claremont residents, especially girls with children of their own. They may have to take a referral due to the funding source, but referrals will have to fit the mission first.

Mayor Lovett: "If the conditional use permit is granted this evening, Mr. McCrory said you would be back with a site application. So we are potentially taking commercial space and converting it to residential use. So my concern is a plan that's well thought-out for sustainability and the management aspect because we have examples of where the best of intentions are present, but the sustainability hasn't been there. And if the community and your donors are going to invest in this I think it's good to know what that is because we have to decide as a planning board what's the best use for that space. And if there's no sustainability and that hasn't been planned out – financial sustainability hasn't been planned out then we are potentially making an error in how we use that space."

Ms. Dix said that space in this building has been going out primarily to non-profits and smaller service-based type organizations. It has not been used commercially and has even been vacant. There has been no evidence of commercial demand for this space. She said they have been overwhelmed by the amount of support they have received for this project from other organizations that are waiting for it to get up and running. They are waiting to support it with people, services and resources.

Alan Croteau said he manages multiple properties on Pleasant Street and throughout the City. 169 Main Street is outside the Franklin Street group of storefront commercial properties. It was changed from industrial to office space and never had store fronts. He said that 16-year olds can't rent anywhere; they have nowhere to go. This project will try to help at the earliest level to prevent future problems. It will be on the 1st floor for ease of access. It is a perfect location for this type of project with all the other groups there to help already in the building.

Ms. Dix said the next step is to work on permitting and the structural work. There is money in the grant they are seeking to pay for the improvements.

It is unlikely that the residents will be needing rental assistance from the City in the early stages. They will be charged a small amount from the assistance they are already getting. The goal is to help them save for a deposit; and there is money in the grant to pay for that. They may be referred to the City if that's the right next step.

Mr. Croteau said the proposed space already has showers and bathrooms. It also connects directly to the One for All space.

There are plenty of parking spaces, especially now that TPI is no longer in the building. Parking for all of the occupants will be shown on the site plan.

The abutters roll was called and the public hearing opened. No one asked to speak, so Mr. Wahrlich closed the hearing

The Board continued to discuss the application.

Mr. McCrory said that demanding success for a particular use is biased. He said we presume success when we review applications. He reminded the Board that this is a land use decision, not review of a business proposal.

Motion: To approve with conditions.

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

There was confusion about the conditions versus the criteria. Mr. Putnam retracted his motion so the Board could review the conditional use criteria. Mr. Damren withdrew his second.

The Board reviewed the first criteria – compatibility with the neighborhood.

Motion: Approve the Application for Conditional Use Permit for locating a rooming house use on the street level floor at 169 Main Street (Tax Map 107, Lot 37), Zoning District MU with the following conditions:

1. The proposed expanded use shall be completed substantially in accordance with the information provided by the applicant for Case No. PL 2018-00003 and testimony during the public hearing for said case. Any deviation from the information provided may require resubmission to the Planning Board for review.
2. The Owner shall submit an Application for Site Plan Amendment within six months of the date of approval for this Conditional Use Permit. This Site Plan Amendment shall include proposed building and site improvements necessary for full building occupancy.
3. The proposed rooming house shall maintain six parking spaces dedicated to its tenants.
4. The applicant shall obtain all necessary permits as determined by the Local, State, and Federal governments.

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

VI. ReVision Energy with a summary of a solar project at the **Claremont Wastewater Treatment Facility**, followed by ACTS Now, a local community group promoting local solar energy generation.

The City is proposing to place solar panels at the wastewater treatment plant. The project has been put out to bid and been awarded to ReVision. Jack Rutterman gave a presentation of ReVision's proposal for the project and answered the Board's questions.

Public Works Director, Scott Sweet, said he is very excited about this project. Energy savings will be broadcast on TV screens at the plant and at the Community Center. The project should get underway in May and take 4-6 weeks to complete.

Vic St. Pierre said since changing to LED bulbs, the City's street light bill has been cut in half. The second highest energy user is the wastewater plant. They are doing some other energy efficiency upgrades around the City. They are looking at the water treatment plant. The community center is 3rd highest energy bill – they are working on it as well.

The Board took a 5-minute break. At 9:00 PM.

Reb MacKenzie, representing ACTS Now, showed a video, "Saving Taxpayer Dollars", which was made in Claremont and available for viewing on YouTube.

She read from the 2017 Master Plan regarding energy goals and objectives. She gave a Power Point presentation about the Acts Now group and their projects/mission.

The Board thanked Ms. MacKenzie for the presentation.

CIP

Mr. McCrory presented the report that went to City Council. It included the evaluation criteria. He said he does not expect the CIP to be fully funded, but it does help City Council decide on how/what to spend for projects.

Mr. Wahrlich was very pleased with the report and said it was a fantastic job. Mayor Lovett thanked Mr. McCrory for the time spent on it.

Mr. McCrory said he is looking to redesign department project sheets to make it clear that projects will be judged against the Master Plan, and to provide the criteria that will be used to evaluate the projects. The current form is obtuse and outdated.

Motion: To adopt this year's CIP and approve forwarding it to the City Council.

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

VII. Reports from Boards and Commissions

There were no reports.

VIII. Other

The OSI spring planning and zoning conference is coming up in April.

IX. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

X. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:49 PM

Respectfully submitted,
deForest Bearse
Resource Coordinator