

Minutes

Planning Board Meeting

March 7, 2019

Members of the Planning Board in attendance were Charles Moreno, Chairman, Don Clifford, Terry Hyland, Steve Leighton, Scott Young, ex-officio member, and Donald Coker, Alternate member. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7:32 PM and announced the members present. The closing date for applications to appear on the agenda for the April 2019 regular meeting is 5 P.M. Tuesday, March 12, 2019; revised materials must be submitted by Tuesday, March 26th. The Chairman advised that the Board has a policy setting time limits for meetings and that the Board will not consider any new business after 10:30 PM and that the meeting will adjourn by 11:00 PM. The Board then turned to the minutes of the previous meeting. Donald Coker, voting member at the last meeting, made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Don Clifford seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion and the vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

The Chairman then briefly reviewed the agenda for the evening. The first item of continuing business was the application of CECIL C. ABELS II for Non-Residential Site Plan Review for a Concert and Outdoor Event Venue to be located at his property at 664 First Crown Point Road (Tax Map 19, Lot 73A). Mr. Abels met with the Board in January and asked for a continuation forward to the late spring/early summer. The second order of continuing business was the application of MICHAEL CARTER for Non-Residential Site Plan Review for a Wedding/Event Venue (PARKER MOUNTAIN LODGE) to be located at his property at 496 Parker Mountain Road (Tax Map 10, Lot 3). Mr. Carter has indicated that they have hired a surveyor and plan to bring forward revised plans for the April meeting. Board members agreed to continue the application forward.

The first item of new business was the application of ERIC A. ROWE for a Function Hall/Wedding Venue to be located at his property at 414 Evans Mountain Road (Tax Map 5, Lot 26). Scott Lawlor of Norway Plains Associates presented the application. Eric Rowe was present. Mr. Rowe currently resides at 414 Evans Mountain Road, nearly two miles from the Parsons Hill Road intersection, on a 78 acre parcel. Sheet 2 of the plan set shows the existing features of the property, including a new 48 foot by 44 foot post and beam barn and farm pond. The existing home is located down a long driveway; overhead electrical wires are being removed and put underground. He proposes to use the new barn as a wedding venue and function hall. They are proposing a 16 foot by 48 foot addition to the barn to house bathrooms and sinks for a set-up area for caterers. There is no intent to have food preparation at the site. They are looking for approval for events for about 100 patrons. A NH DES approved septic system is under construction; the system would be for a multi-use structure equipped to serve 100. They are considering creating two parking areas; one with 12 spaces and one with 21 to 23 spaces. At 2 to 3 people per vehicle, this would provide adequate parking. The proposed parking areas have been graded out. They plan to create a structured lawn with a gravel base and then grass for the parking areas. They have spoken to the Fire Department about using the fire pond for fire protection if necessary.

Donald Coker asked how they came up with 35 parking spaces for 100 people. Mr. Lawlor said that this calculation is based on other venues that he has designed before, and that there is room for expansion. He said that he thinks that 100 patrons is the proposed limitation. Charles Moreno asked whether the intent was to run the venue for summer? Three seasons? Mr. Rowe responded that the intent is for summers and fair weather. He said that the barn has heat and insulation only because that is something that is difficult to add later. The location doesn't lend itself to three seasons he said, noting that even May can be early up there. He is thinking maybe the third week in May through the first week of October, as it gets too cold to be outside after that. He said that events would be weekends only, and probably only Saturdays. He said that there would be no overnights and no in-house food preparation. The septic system is state of the art, he said. They have plenty of water but the system is designed as a low-flow system designed for two toilets and probably a urinal. They have planned a 1600 gallon per day system even though they are using low water facilities. Donald Coker asked if the idea was to hold only private gatherings. Mr. Rowe said that he would also be open to hosting political events, fundraisers, and events for non-profit organizations. Board members asked about bands/live music. Mr. Rowe said that he understands about the 10PM time limit in the noise ordinance and also said that neighbors do not hear them because of the distance, but that the barn will not be a concert venue. Charles Moreno asked about trash removal. Mr. Rowe said that he is working with Pinard for a dumpster. There was discussion of whether there should be a dumpster pad on the plan. Mr. Lawlor said that he can add a note. Mr. Rowe said that he would move the dumpster with his own front loader so

that it is not in sight during events but can be brought forward to be picked up after. He does not want to put the dumpster in the parking areas; he will probably put the dumpster behind the barn. Don Clifford suggested that the 'behind the barn' location be shown on the plan. Donald Coker asked about roads, paving and drainage, noting that these have been issues for other applicants. Steve Leighton and Terry Hyland said that this case is different. Steve Leighton said that this is agrotourism. Mr. Leighton said that he believes that the Board only needs to be satisfied that patrons can get in and out. Donald Coker asked if this really qualifies as agrotourism, noting previous legal cases, the RSAs, and the criteria of whether hosting events is incidental to the primary use of the property. Steve Leighton and Charlie Moreno both noted the history of lowbush blueberry production. Terry Hyland said that he is in support of a farm being saved and said that farms need supplemental income. Charles Moreno noted the Master Plan and support of agriculture. Steve Leighton said that this is a good idea for this property. Scott Young said that the RSAs can be interpreted in different ways, and said that he would not comment without doing more research. Steve Leighton said that he thinks that the difference is that Strafford is zoned agricultural/residential. Charlie Moreno, Scott Young and Steve Leighton all agreed that they feel that this would qualify as agrotourism. Eric Rowe said that the agrotourism RSAs had changed in 2016 in response to the Forster case. Charles Moreno said that the Board would like to hear more about the blueberries. Mr. Rowe said that he used to harvest 15 to 20 tons of blueberries and employed as many as 20 to 30 students in the height of the season. Today it is hard to find help so they are improving the fields by removing rocks and filling in holes in hopes of using mechanical harvesting in the future. He has completed about 7 acres and plans a freezer for 5 to 6 tons of berries. Mr. Rowe noted that there are about five weeks a year that can tie into a blueberry theme.

Board members then reviewed the plans with the checklist. The following items are missing and/or need further clarification: current use status; engineers stamp and surveyors seal; ledge and soils or a waiver request for these items; perc test data from the approved septic system design; monuments and tract boundaries or waiver request for these items as the site is in the middle of a large tract of land; floor plans; waste disposal plans and dumpster location; sanitation/show rest rooms on floor plan; lighting; fire protection plans; signs; food arrangements/add detail as noted in the discussion. Mr. Moreno noted that fire protection, lighting, signage, and the road need to be discussed. Scott Lawlor advised that the farm pond can be used for fire protection and the barn has plenty of egress, so he said that he does not feel that sprinklers will be necessary. Scott Whitehouse, the Fire Chief, said that he would like to calculate the capacity of the pond and noted that he wants designated access to the pond. He also noted that the Town is looking at a dry hydrant at Tasker's, down near the Parsons Hill Road intersection. Regarding the roadway and safety concerns, Mr. Whitehouse said that he has asked for improvements on width and turn outs going into the area to allow for safety vehicles to access the site. He said that there is some concern with the choke point at Ken Berry's/Mel Liston's at the start of the Class VI portion of the road, but he said that they can meet standard road width criteria for safety vehicles beyond this point. He said that there is enough space on the property itself for access and turning, but that they will need some improved surface in order to access the farm pond. Eric Rowe said that the pond gets low but that there is some water all year. Mr. Whitehouse said that in combination with the Tasker pond, there would be plenty of fire protection as long as the road is built to what the Fire Department is looking for.

The Chairman then called on Kerry Omand and Mimi Jost, representing the Conservation Commission, who are abutters. Mr. Omand asked for a clarification regarding the plans. Scott Lawlor noted that they are providing larger areas than required under the Alteration of Terrain rules. As regards lighting, Mr. Rowe said that they are planning lighting around the building. Mr. Moreno advised that the Board may want more for safety reasons. Mr. Rowe said that they might put lanterns down the driveway but that he does not want extensive lighting. Don Clifford noted a concern that there be adequate lighting between the venue and the parking. Mr. Rowe said that they will probably put marker lights along the driveway. Mr. Rowe suggested that they still have quite a lot of work to do in preparation, and that they are probably planning for 2020. Board members noted that the town ordinances require dark skies lighting and asked that paths to the parking areas and lighting be shown on the plans. Mr. Rowe said that 70 people is the perfect audience and that he does not want to change the layout of the road by Ken Berry's. Mr. Lawlor said that they have lighting distributors and will work with Mr. Rowe to be sure that the lighting is dark skies compliant.

Mr. Rowe said that they are not proposing signage, only temporary folding signs during an event. He said that he feels that Google maps will suffice and is not planning on permanent signs. Don Clifford noted that he is also concerned about internal signage, such as pathways to parking, etc.

As regards the road, they noted that it is about 4000 feet from Mel Liston's to the old barn. Noting that the road is Class VI and that residents/property owners are responsible for maintenance, Steve Leighton suggested that

as long as Scott Whitehouse is happy with the road, he is okay with it. Scott Whitehouse said that the plan is for widening the road, ditching and swaling. If they get an 18 foot span, then he is happy with it. He said that a pull-out area is available. Mr. Rowe said that they do not plan to operate when they cannot have the road raked. Don Clifford asked about noise. Eric Rowe agreed to abide by the town's noise ordinance. Don Clifford noted that this should be added to the Site Plan narrative.

Recapping the items on the plan that need clarifications, Mr. Moreno noted current use status, seals, submit perc test data as a separate page, waste disposal area, and suggested that if they wish to ask for waivers, that the waivers must be written up and submitted to the Board. Waivers requests had been mentioned for full boundaries, mapping, and soils classifications and ledge. Items that need clarifications in the Site Plan narrative include floor plans, waste disposal, lighting, utilities/sanitation, fire protection (pond), turn-outs, signage, scheduling, and noise. Further discussion will be continued to the next regular meeting; revised plans would be due by March 26th.

Board members then briefly noted other projects before the Board and other possible wedding venues. The former Payne property was noted, and it was agreed to check for residential use. Board members also noted that the Parker Mountain Lodge people had suggested that they were booking for the coming summer, and the Board agreed that it would be helpful for the Selectmen to write a letter advising the applicants that they must meet the town's requirements before they can schedule events. It was noted that they will need to pass fire safety and electrical inspections before they can accept guests at the property. Board members agreed that based on the revised information that has been submitted so far, it is clear that Parker Mountain Lodge is a non-residential property and will need a Special Exception from the Board of Adjustment as well as an approved site plan.

Board members then turned to informal business. There were no items of informal business.

There being no further business before the Board, Scott Young made a motion to adjourn. Don Clifford seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the vote was unanimous in the affirmative and the meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.