

**TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

January 19, 2021

6:00 P.M.

Council Room, Municipal Building

PRESENT:

Steve Conley, Chairman
Steve St. Pierre, Vice Chairman
Stephen Gould, Secretary
Harvey Austin
Brady Chapman
Kris Laney
Matt Smith
Joel Greenwood, Planner
Cynthia Kirk, Recording Secretary

ABSENT:

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Bryan Belliveau, Code Enforcement Officer
Larry Pike, RFGH
Jacoby Johnson, RFGH
Steve Blake, BH2M

1) QUORUM:

Planning Board Meeting called to order at 7:00 P.M. Quorum was present.

2) MINUTES OF THE January 5, 2021 PLANNING BOARD MEETING TO BE APPROVED:

Motion by Stephen Gould to approve the January 5, 2021 Planning Board meeting minutes, as written. Seconded by Harvey Austin. Motion passed 5-0. (Matt Smith abstained)

3) SITE PLAN / SUBDIVISION

A) Discussion of the Site Inventory & Analysis submitted by BH2M on behalf of Redington Fairview General Hospital for a proposed new 36,000 sq. ft. medical office building to be located on Jones Street (Map 20, Lots 27, 28 and 29).

Steve Blake from BH2M gave a brief presentation of the project. The proposed project is for a new 36,000 sq. ft. 3 floor medical office building. It will be located on Jones Street next to the existing parking lot on Jones Street. He stated that all of the needed utilities are already there for them to connect to. They will also be putting in addition parking where the family medicine building is located now. Mr. Blake said there are additional permitting requirements with the State that they are currently working on as well including their DEP application that they have not submitted yet. He said the hospital currently has a traffic movement permit with DOT and they have submitted the amended permit to DOT already. Larry Pike explained that the purpose for this new building is to provide additional space for incoming professionals since the existing medical office building is currently at capacity. This will provide additional services for their patients.

Joel Greenwood asked if they have extended the existing access road around the building. Mr. Blake said that they have reviewed it with the fire department and have extended it per their suggestions.

Steve Conley asked if they are changing the parking area or adding new parking. Mr. Blake said they will be saving as much of the existing parking as they can and adding some new parking area. He said there are some challenges with the grades and they are currently working those out now.

Harvey Austin asked if the sewer fees had been calculated for this new building yet and if they will be grandfathered for the buildings that were there. He doesn't feel that they should be since all of these were purchased separately. Bryan Belliveau said this is something that they will have to look into as far as how much the sewer fees will be. He said the determination will be based on what the law allows.

Joel Greenwood asked if any waivers were being requested. Steve Blake said he doesn't believe that they will be requesting any waivers.

Joel said nothing formal will need to be done tonight. The next step will be for the applicant to submit a complete formal application.

Steve St. Pierre asked if once the new building is built, will it change the use of the existing medical office building that is attached to the hospital. Larry Pike said that Redington Primary Care will move into the new building along with other services that are currently sharing offices in the hospital. This will allow quite an expansion of services for patients.

Joel Greenwood asked if their DEP permit that they are submitting will address any stormwater issues with the new building. Mr. Blake said it will and they will be accommodating any additional stormwater created.

4) ITEMS BY THE PUBLIC:

5) COMMUNICATIONS:

6) NEW BUSINESS:

7) UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A) Steve Conley said he would like to address the fine that was imposed on Mr. Hewett for the after the fact Shoreland Zoning permit they reviewed a couple months ago. Steve said that Bryan had done some looking into our ordinance and found out that the Planning Board does not have the authority to impose additional fees/ fines for after the fact permits. It gives that authority to the municipal officers only. Steve Conley asked if that had been rectified with Mr. Hewett. Bryan said it has not yet because he wanted to discuss it with the Planning Board first.

Steve Conley said with this new information they now know that they do not have that authority. He said they should discuss what should happen going forward and if the Planning Board wants to really be involved with the punitive actions on permits. He suggested maybe drafting an ordinance that would give them a specific set of guidelines to follow in these cases.

Steve St. Pierre said that they should either take a vote to reverse that fine that was charged to Mr. Hewett or if they aren't allowed to do that then have a conversation about sending a recommendation to reverse the fee to the Selectmen.

Steve Conley asked everyone how they feel about the Planning Board having any authority to impose fines or penalties. Harvey Austin said he would just like to be able to send a recommendation to the Selectmen if they feel a fine or penalty should be imposed. Other than that, they shouldn't be deciding on those themselves. Stephen Gould said that in Mr. Hewett's case it sounds like they should go ahead and reimburse the penalty.

Motion by Steve St. Pierre to remove the condition of a double fee on Mr. Hewett's Shoreland Zoning application and to reimburse Mr. Hewett the additional fee that was paid. Seconded by Harvey Austin. Motion passed 5-0. (Matt Smith abstained)

8) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE:

A) Review draft of Economic Profile section.

Joel has shared a copy of the preliminary updates to the Economic Profile Section of the Comp. Plan. He said that he has sent them to other people as well such as Kristina Cannon at Main Street, Jason Gayne at the Chamber and Jeff Hewett for their feedback. Kristina sent back a response and Jason Gayne will be calling in on the conference line tonight. Joel asked if there was anything specific that anybody would like to talk about.

Jason Gayne joined the meeting by conference call at 6:33 pm.

Steve Conley asked Jason if there was anything he would like to talk about regarding the business and economy in Skowhegan. Jason Gayne said not yet and is just going with the flow.

Joel reviewed certain aspects of the updates he had presented. It appears that Skowhegan is still the economic center of the county and has a large number of non-residents coming into town to either shop or work. Steve Conley mentioned that there aren't many numbers on here for Pittsfield which is an important part of Somerset County. Joel said he would get those numbers and add them in. He further reviewed the patterns in employed and unemployed people as well and looking at the unemployable people.

Steve Conley said they should probably look at including a predictive model as far as population, employed and unemployed people in town. He said our country is in a very different situation right now from how it has ever been and those factors need to be considered in doing this update. Joel said unfortunately we can't tell what the future will bring so they really can go only by the numbers they have now and hope for the best. The Comprehensive plan is just a guideline to use to achieve the goals that the people of Skowhegan want for the town.

Joel then reviewed the major employers in town and the ratios of people that live in town and work in town. Sappi, New Balance, MSAD #54 and the hospital are still the major employers within the town. Stephen Gould said another big employer is Richard Charrier Trucking and Walmart. Jason Gayne asked what was included in employed group of people and if it includes all of the nonprofit groups and organizations that we have in the area. Joel explained that it includes anybody that collects a wage whether it is from an employer, private sector or self-employed people. Steve Conley asked if it broke down the statistics into being employed full-time or part-time at all. Joel said it does not. He can see if he can get that information. Steve Conley asked if there were any categories that anybody sees as missing from the list. Nobody mentioned any.

Joel said that one section he will need help with is the index in the back of the section that lists all current businesses in town. He said it appears that it will definitely need some updating. Please let him know of any changes that need to be made to the list. He will also be checking with Jeff Hewett regarding this. Joel asked Jason Gayne if the Chamber has any information about all of the local businesses. Jason said he does and would be happy to help them updating the list.

Joel asked if anybody had any ideas that could be added to the opportunities section. Kris Laney said a great opportunity for this town if we really want this town to be super busy and grow would be a casino like he has mentioned before. Steve St. Pierre asked when the trampoline park will be opening. Bryan said that the permits have been issued and they hope to open by June.

Joel said an important thing to look at as well when trying to attract people to the area is infrastructure. With everything that has happened over the last year, a lot of people have switched to working from home. Therefore, it's important to make sure the town has good broadband service to accommodate those people who might want to relocate to Skowhegan.

Steve St. Pierre also mentioned what they are planning to do at Eaton Mountain will also be a way to bring people into Skowhegan. They are planning on having a four-season destination area with skiing, trails, camping and biking.

Steve Conley asked if anybody had heard anything about a new school being built to replace some of the existing school buildings. Stephen Gould said he had heard that it was going to be built behind Margaret Chase Smith School where the tennis courts are now.

Joel asked Bryan if he believes the infrastructure currently has the capabilities to handle new growth in the area such as water and sewer abilities. Jason Gayne said that one thing they could also look at is extending the water and sewer up further on the Lakewood Road. He said that would allow for new businesses on the Madison side of the Lakewood Road to be able to hook into it which in turn could bring more growth to Skowhegan. Harvey said that they aren't here to take care of Madison when they have plenty of area on Route 201 for growth and new businesses to go. Bryan said that the water supply with Maine Water is currently being upgraded down by the river and there has been ongoing updates to the sewers over the years. He believes that the infrastructure can handle growth but Joel might to check with Brent Dickey about the true sewer capacities.

Steve St. Pierre said another thing we need in this town is additional lodging. We really need a hotel in this town. He said we host all of these events like the Brewfest to bring people into this town but we can't keep them here for lodging as well. They all travel back to Waterville to stay and probably eat meals because there are so many options there. Harvey asked what the new building is going to be that they want to put downtown where the KVI was. Bryan explained that it will be a mixed-use building. The first floor will be for the Farmer's Market. Then the additional floors will be for retail and office space as well as apartment units.

Kris Laney said that something else they should mention is making Skowhegan easier to work with when it comes to new businesses and developers. He said he had a hard time with everything he had to do when it came to developing in Skowhegan and he doesn't know if he would do it again. Harvey agreed. Jason Gayne said that he has had several conversations with the Selectmen regarding this and thought that they were going to talk to the Planning Board when they had the joint meeting which hasn't happened for awhile because of COVID. Steve Conley said that the town not being business friendly definitely should be looked into further. He asked Kris and Jason Gayne to make a list of specific ways that the town is not business friendly that they have encountered. Then they can look at the list as see what they can do to change that. Jason Gayne said one way he sees the town as being not business friendly is the fact that most of our Selectmen and the town manager have not even stepped foot into a lot of businesses that we have in town to at least welcome them to Skowhegan.

Bryan said that one challenge he has seen for new businesses coming into town is that a lot of the existing structures have not been kept up to code. So, a new business comes in and signs a lease but when he goes to do the occupancy inspection there are many things that need to be brought up to code that they weren't even aware of. He would like to be able to work with the fire department and be able to go into all of these buildings on an annual basis to inspect them and make sure they remain up to code.

9) ITEMS BY:

a) SELECTMEN:

b) DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Bryan said that there are some code changes coming up including the mechanical code which will now need to be enforced by him. This will add more work for him as well as another permit that will need to be issued out. He said the state is also updating the energy and plumbing codes as well. All of these new codes will add additional costs to new buildings being built as well as repairs to existing buildings.

Bryan also said that he met with the new owners of the Dill Center and they are planning on reopening the gym in there after it not being used for many years. They are putting together a life safety plan right now. They will also be renting out office space within the building.

Bryan talked about the importance of recycling more in town to help save on the costs of waste disposal. Harvey asked if the transfer station breaks even on the sale of the recyclables. Bryan said not yet but it could come close if we were capturing all of the recyclables from everyone in town instead of people throwing them in the trash.

c) MEMBERS:

Everyone welcomed Matt Smith to the Planning Board.
Stephen Gould asked if we have heard anything from the Charter School regarding the parking enforcement officer that was one of their conditions of approval. Joel said we can put this on the next agenda.

d) CHAIRMAN:

e) STAFF:

Joel said they have a pre-application meeting coming up regarding another solar array.

9) ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Harvey Austin to adjourn at 8:18 p.m., Seconded by Stephen Gould.
Motion passed 6-0.

Minutes approved on February 16 , 2021.

Chairman

