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Debby Willis, Chairperson
Angelia Christopher, Administrative Assistant

PLANNING BOARD

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday May 10, 2022 @ 6:00 PM

City Council Chambers

1. Call the Meeting to Order-Chair Willis called the meeting to order at 6pm

2. Roll Call- Board members- Pam Mitchel, Shawn Dolley, Matt Murphy, Adam Lemire- via zoom, Lisa St. Hilaire, and Chair Debby Willis. Others present- City Attorney Jonathan Pottle, City Planner Mark Eyerman, Tracey Desjardins- Economic Development Director, Kris McNeill- Code Enforcement Officer. Applicant- Paul Boghossian- Hathaway Holdings, Jim Coffin- Coffin Engineering. Central Maine Newspapers Reporter- Jessica Lowell. Abutters-Phyllis Gardiner, Robert 'Logan' Johnston, Helen Stevens, Brian Stephenson, Anne Cough, Ed Greiner, Jessica Robbins, Robert Monniere, Janice Joyce, and Melanie Mohny.

3. Review of April 12, 2022 meeting minutes- Pam Mitchel states that she feels that the board should table this set of minutes and review at the next meeting. Matt Murphy seconded. No further discussion. Roll call vote. All members present in favor.

4. Public Hearing- Gardiner Green- Continuation of the March 8, 2022 meeting for the Final Subdivision— Site Plan development at 150 Dresden Ave. City Tax map 032 Lots 023-023A in HDR- *The review period has been extended past the 60 day timeline by mutual agreement.*

The Board agrees to start by reviewing the Site Plan application for completeness. Lisa St. Hilaire recused herself from this application due to being a direct abutting neighbor.

Jim Coffin explains that one of the items that the Board wanted identified in this application is where the lighting would be on site. This application has a photometric plan which shows this information. The Site Plan map reflects the correction to 34 units, and removes the additional unit on the upper floor. The Planning Board does not have to review or approve floor plans where this is apartments and not condos. The rendering has been revised to reflect the Board's request and there is a very complete photo log included in this application.

Pam Mitchel feels that everything that the Board asked for, is in the application that was submitted. However, the information about building materials for the façade, which is a requirement for Site Plan review, is not included in this submission but was in the March application. Mr. Coffin will make sure that this information is in the next submission. There are also a couple of errors with the plans. One of stairways doesn't open up to anything, which needs to be corrected. Also the heights of the buildings need to be included on the elevation plan.

Pam Mitchel feels that these are areas that could be conditioned, and would like to make a motion. Pam Mitchel moves that the Site Plan application is complete with three conditions. That there needs to be a list of building materials, there needs to be heights of buildings added to the elevation plan, and the error with the stairwell on the Site Plan needs to be corrected. Matt Murphy offered a second motion- No further discussion. Roll Call vote. All Board members present in favor.

Chair Willis asks if anyone from the public would like to speak.

Lisa St. Hilaire is a direct abutter, and has a list of topics that she would like to discuss. Areas that Ms. St. Hilaire has identified that she feels need to be included in the application include- an estimated cost of the project and a construction schedule. There should also be a complete written description of the project. Plans should show traffic and pedestrian flows, and parking lot landscaping requirements should also be included on the rec plan. Ms. St. Hilaire had questions about room sizes, and open space requirements. She presented information about the topography of the land that had been designated for open space and how developing this land could cause erosion and also put imperiled plants that are in the area in jeopardy.

Mr. Coffin explains that the written description for the application is on the front page. Sidewalks will be built as shown on the plan but there will not be any other changes to the flow of vehicle or pedestrian traffic as they will be using the existing parking lot. In the current market, the cost of construction materials is very unpredictable and coming up with a cost could be difficult. The Board discussed the anticipated construction timeframe at a previous meeting and agreed that was reasonable. The Board was pleased with the photos that were included in the application and feel that the Site Plan is complete with the 3 conditions that have been listed.

The Board has decided to move on to review the Subdivision plan.

On the Recording plat the open space area shows a slight downsize and the buildings that are not part of this project have been clearly identified. The parking lot at the front of the building will be renovated as shown on the plan, but the larger parking lot out behind the building will remain untouched for now. The Board does not have any questions at this time. Chair Willis opened the public hearing. Neighboring abutter, Lisa St. Hilaire questions whether the Board should sign a recording plat that has numerous inconsistencies. She feels that the Board needs to do a site visit/inspection, so they can see what the project will really look like.

Phyllis Gardiner is also working with the neighboring abutters and would like to point out the lack of proof on financial capacity, the numerous errors/discrepancies in the application, the inattention to detail, and the lack of follow through when supplying required materials. The applicant has a letter from the bank stating that the bank is interested in exploring this project and opportunity further, not a letter stating that the applicant can secure a loan for the project. The neighbors of this project are concerned that this property could sit undeveloped and unattended like the property in Bethel, Gehring Green. One map shows one layout/design, another map shows extra units, different layouts, etc.

The group is also concerned about the area that has been designated as open space. The definition of open space reads as a yard, playground, trails, etc. but the abutting neighbors feel that this area slopes off too aggressively to be used in this manner, and that it could make the ground unstable. There is a headwater intermittent stream on the property that is not recognized on wetland maps, but has been identified as a PFO S2 by the DEP, which means it is imperiled. Abutting neighbor-Helen Stevens- speaks about her steep backyard, and the seasonal streams that pop up in the springtime. There is a lot of loose soil and downed trees in these ravines, including the ravines that are on the land identified for use for open space for this application.

The abutting neighbors discussed how this renovation will not fit into the character of the neighborhood. Ms. Gardiner adds that the guidelines are clear in the LUO for the HDR zone. The façade of the building should be

consistent with the homes on the neighboring lots, and from everything they have seen with this application, the guidelines will not be met. Mr. Coffin asks if legal counsel will make a determination about whether or not the HDR design standards should apply. Attorney Pottle explains that this decision will come from the Board.

Applicant Paul Boghossian spoke to the Board and the abutting neighbors. He reminded them that when he started working on the Hathaway Mill in Waterville, it was full of pigeons, and now there are 600+ people working and living there. This project has changed since he first approached this board two years ago. He has changed it from a phased project because it was not being embraced that way. He tells the Board that he does not want to see this building fall into disrepair like Merrill Manor has. He admits that this project is never going to look like the Harraseeket Inn, there is only so much that can be done to the appearance of the building. This project is not a reconstruction, it is a renovation.

Mr. Coffin addresses the board in regards to open space and suggests that perhaps the best thing to do is to move the open space area away from the proposed location, and use a section of the parking lot for it. This would keep the Open space area out of the 'stream', and also eliminate the concerns about whether or not this land is suitable for open space. Chair Willis asks the Board- if Open Space is being moved out of the area in question, are all of these concerns about the topography of the land, and the validity of the stream still valid and does there still need to be research? Jim Coffin is going to send someone to assess the stream that has been mentioned in the area that is designated for open space to determine what the status is.

The Board is frustrated with the errors and inconsistencies in the application. The architectural drawings have come back incorrect time and again. Chair Willis is very concerned that what goes into the record needs to be correct. She suggests that this application be tabled and come back for review at a later date. She reminds the applicant that he needs to double check all documents before submitting them to the city to make sure that all figures match, all drawings are correct, and everything matches up to narratives. Board members agree.

There was a discussion about financial capacity as several people question if the letter that he has presented is sufficient. Attorney Pottle speaks to the group about construction costs, and financial capacity. With the construction market still unstable, it is challenging to get a concrete price on materials. Rents continue to go up every day and the affordable housing component will be set according to state guidelines. In order to secure financing, he likely needs to have approval for the project. After this application is approved, it will take at least 120 days for the financing process to be complete, at which point he could submit more information on construction costs.

Chair Willis- asks what the Board wants to do with this application.

Pam Mitchel moves to table the Subdivision application, and leave the public hearing open. Matt Murphy seconds the motion. No further discussion. Roll call vote. All members present in favor to table Subdivision review until the Subdivision application comes back.

5. Other Business- Home Deals of Maine will be on the June Planning Board agenda to review the possible expansion of Iron Mine Mobile Home Park. There is already an application established for the regularly scheduled July 12th meeting. Gardiner Green will plan to come back in July as a second monthly Planning Board meeting on July 26th.

6. Adjourn- Lisa St. Hilaire offered the first motion to adjourn at 9:45 pm. Matt Murphy offered a second. All present in favor.