

Planning Board Minutes
January 23, 2019 – 7:00 P.M.
Town Council Chambers
125 Main Street
East Greenwich, RI

Members Present: Jason Gomez, Chair; Nate Ginsburg; Ben Lupovitz; Katie Keeffe

Members Absent: Gia Griffith; Muhammad Akhtar

Staff present: Lisa Bourbonnais, Planning Director; Aaron Lindo, Planning Technician; Peter Skwirz, Legal Counsel

Mr. Gomez opened the meeting at 7:05 and introduced those present.

1. Extension: Final Plan Approval of “Frenchtown Place” – Applicant is Lawrence Dowler and the location is Frenchtown Road at Assessor’s Map 29, Plat 18, Lots 60 and 7. Property is zoned F-1, Farm and an 11 lot cluster subdivision on about 22 acres gained final approval on April 18, 2018. Developers are entitled to an extension of the time period for recording Final Plans under Section 21(e) of the Land Development and Subdivision Review Regulations.

Thomas Cronin, an attorney filling in for his colleague Peter Nolan, represented the applicant. He stated the project is under a purchase and sales agreement and so the applicants would like to gain an extension so the details could be worked out. Mr. Gomez explained that the applicant has the option to extend the final plan recording by right if they show up to a hearing. Mr. Ginsburg thus motioned to grant the extension, seconded by Mr. Lupovitz, and unanimously approved.

2. Master Plan review - with required Public Informational Meeting - of a 12-unit residential Major Land Development proposed by Grenier Properties, LLC. Location is 32 Exchange Street, being Assessor’s Map 085, Plat 001, Lots 087 and 382. Property is owned by Grenier Properties, LLC and is roughly 0.47 acres in size. Zoning is R-6, high density residential. 25% of proposed units will be “affordable” so the project can proceed as a Comprehensive Permit with expedited review. Property is located within the Downtown Historic District but because it is a Comprehensive Permit, the Historic District Commission’s review will be conducted by the Planning Board.

John Kupa, an attorney representing the applicant, addressed the Board. He explained that he had great confidence in the Board to render a decision as comprised but that he would prefer to have at least one more board member present for the Master Plan review. His client is accustomed to a 7-member board and they understood there has been some local turnover and vacancy recently. He asked the Board for a continuance to the next scheduled meeting. Mr. Lupovitz made a motion to continue the item until the February 6th meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Keeffe and unanimously approved.

3. Pre-application review of a project that meets the definition of a Major Land Development. Applicant is NuGen Capital Management, LLC and the owner is Briggs

Drive Associates. Location is 10 Briggs Drive, (former Bostitch building) being Assessor's Map 36, Plat 16E, Lot 36. Project involves installation of a major roof-top solar energy system which will require a special use permit from the Zoning Board of Review.

There was no one to represent the application but the Planning staff noted receipt of a letter (provided for the record) from the applicant, NuGen Capital, requesting a continuance to the February 6th meeting. Mr. Ginsburg made a motion to continue the item until February 6th. The motion was seconded by Ms. Keffe and unanimously approved.

4. Review of Municipal Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Consistent with Chapter 55 of the Town Code, the Planning Board is charged with recommending annually a 6-year capital plan. Year 1 of said plan becomes the capital element of the Town's overall budget for the ensuing fiscal year. Anticipated expenditures by Town Departments, including the School Department, were discussed.

Ms. Bourbonnais went over the Year 1 plan. In discussing the schools, the point was made that the School Department had not spent any of their capital improvement money from last year, opting instead to spend it on other things. Their Year 1 budget for capital improvements is thus exactly the same as last year.

There was a lengthy and in-depth discussion regarding the School Department's capital program. It was concluded that there is now zero confidence that the School Department will do anything that they say they are going to do in regards to capital improvements. The Planning Board resolved to write a letter to the Town Council saying that the Board cannot recommend the School Department's budget.

The Board went through each department's CIP submissions. The Public Works budget was approved as well as the Community Services and Parks budget. The Police Department budget was approved with the recommendation of a phased approach to purchasing vehicles. The Board approved the Information Technology budget. The Board felt that they did not have enough information regarding the Fire Department budget – which was submitted by the prior Acting Chief and thus now may or may not represent current priorities. The Board therefore neither accepted nor declined the proposed Fire Department capital spending plan.

Ms. Keffe made a motion to encapsulate the Board's discussion of the long- and short-term capital programs and forward a summary to the Town Council. Given, however, that the current year audit is not complete and no current financial statements are available in Town, the Board cannot complete all of its responsibilities per Town Code. No assessment of impact on the tax rate of the proposed spending plan or any meaningful consideration of the Town's bonding or other financing capacities can be conducted. In discussing the motion, the Board agreed by consensus that the Council should not approve any capital plan until all of those variables had been thoroughly aired and vetted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ginsburg and unanimously approved. Staff and Mr. Gomez were directed to prepare a written report to the Council as required.

5. Minutes: The Board is asked to review and approve minutes of the 10/17/18 and 11/7/18 meetings.

A motion to approve both sets of minutes was made by Mr. Ginsburg, seconded by Mr. Lupovitz

and unanimously approved.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ginsburg. Meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Aaron Lindo, Planning Technician.

For further information, please refer to the recording available in the Planning Department.