

PLANNING BOARD

DATE: September 10, 2015

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Large Meeting Room

FOR: Regular Meeting

PRESENT: Jonathan Hankin, Chairman; Suzanne Fowle; Brandee Nelson; Malcolm Fick
Jack Musgrove, Remote Participation
Jeremy Higa, Associate Member
Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Mr. Hankin called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

FORM A'S:

There were no Form A's presented.

MINUTES: AUGUST 27, 2015

Ms. Fowle made a motion to approve the minutes of August 27, 2015 as amended, Mr. Fick seconded, all in favor.

SPECIAL PERMIT: 2 ELM STREET ExtraSpecialTeas

Architect Anthony Barnaba was present with applicant Cherri Sanes to discuss the application submitted for a restaurant use at 2 Elm Street and a waiver from the parking requirements.

Ms. Sanes that she and her husband have a 22 year old autistic son who is no longer eligible to attend the public school. She said they want to open the restaurant to provide a place and opportunity for her son and other autistic people in the community to work in a communal atmosphere and integrate into the community.

Ms. Sanes presented a short video that explained the goal and vision behind the business.

Mr. Higa arrived.

Mr. Rembold asked how many seats were proposed.

Ms. Sanes said there would be 17 seats on the first floor.

Mr. Rembold asked if there would be outdoor seating.

Ms. Sanes said there may be some seating available outside but there would not be any service outside. The seats would be available for people to take their purchases outside.

Mr. Hankin asked about seating and access on the second floor.

Mr. Barnaba said seating upstairs would replicate the first floor but would be used only for overflow. He said as long as the service upstairs would be the same service available downstairs it is not required to meet the ADA access requirements.

Mr. Fick asked if Site Plan Review would be required.

Mr. Rembold said there are minimal exterior alterations. He said it is up to the Building Inspector to determine if the change of use would trigger a Site Plan Review application.

Mr. Hankin asked where the trash would go.

Mr. Barnaba said there is room in the back for trash containers. A large dumpster would not be required.

Mr. Hankin asked about the food preparation.

Ms. Sanes said the site would be for prepping food that would be prepared off site and brought in.

Mr. Hankin asked where the food would be prepared.

Ms. Sanes said they have an arrangement with Hevreh to use their commercial kitchen.

Ms. Nelson asked about a handicap parking space.

Ms. Sanes said she had spoken with Joe Sokul about a handicap parking space. At this time one can not be added to Elm Street. There are a couple of handicap spaces available not too far from the restaurant.

Mr. Rembold said there is a handicap space across the street in front of the First Congregational Church and one located near the drive-up window at Berkshire Bank. He said both are within 300 feet.

Ms. Nelson asked how many parking spaces are required.

Mr. Rembold said 11 spaces are required. Mr. Rembold suggested that the Board discuss what the appropriate number of seats might be, the level of service, the scale of the project, the type of use and potentially how many patrons might walk instead of drive to the location. He suggested these considerations be part of the discussion for the deviation in the parking requirement.

Mr. Barnaba said the building is very small. The floor space is 600 square feet.

Mr. Fick said there will be 17 seats on the first floor.

Mr. Barnaba said the seating will be done in different groupings.

Mr. Fick asked about the second floor.

Mr. Barnaba said the staff will be prepping food on the second floor. Overflow seating will be available, 10-12 seats. He said he did not expect the seating to be used much.

Mr. Fick said there would be a maximum of 30 seats.

Mr. Barnaba suggested to Ms. Sanes that she think about what she would want for a maximum number of seats.

Mr. Rembold reminded the Board that directly across the street there is no parking required for a restaurant use. He asked Ms. Sanes what the hours of operation would be.

Ms. Sanes said the restaurant would be open 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Monday through Friday.

Mr. Hankin said, if successful, this might morph into a popular model.

Ms. Sanes said this is a unique opportunity for Great Barrington. There are very few places in the country that are providing this type of business. It is a wonderful opportunity for the community and the people.

Ms. Nelson asked what the ratio would be for autistic people and non-autistic people.

Ms. Sanes said there would be two full time staff members all the time.

Ms. Nelson made a motion to send a favorable recommendation to the Selectboard for the restaurant use in the B-2 zone and to support the waiver for the deviation from the parking requirement because there is adequate parking available on the street, there are adequate handicap spaces available proximate to the site, the adjacent zone directly across the street has no parking requirements and it is expected that the majority patrons would be pedestrian traffic, Ms. Fowle seconded, all in favor.

CITIZENS SPEAK TIME:

Tom Norton, a member of the Parks Commission and Diego Gutierrez were present to discuss the playground at the Village Common in Housatonic.

Mr. Norton said the Parks Commission is proposing to purchase playground equipment. It is proposed to replace the chain link fence and to plant some trees.

Mr. Hankin said his only concern is if the Town issues an RFP for the school building. He said at one time there was a proposal for diagonal parking between the building and the playground. He said there had been some discussion of being 3-4 feet short of having enough land to provide diagonal parking. He said he would not want this plan to jeopardize reuse of the building.

Ms. Fowle said she would not support giving up one inch of the slope. She said it is vital to the Town.

Mr. Hankin said he understands and that everyone wants what is best for Housatonic.

Ms. Nelson said nothing has happened with that property in 8 years. It is good to take action.

ZONING BYLAWS:

Mr. Musgrove began participation by phone at 8:04 P.M.

Mr. Rembold suggested discussion of the three transition zones, State Road from the Brown Bridge to Belcher Square, South Main Street from the Police Department south and from the intersection of Main Street and Route 23 (aka Maple Avenue) west to the railroad track.

Mr. Rembold said mixed use is allowed by right in the Housatonic Center, the I zone and the I-2 zone. The Town has kept a close eye on mixed use by requiring it to be allowed by special permit in the other zones.

Mr. Rembold said the area from the Police Department south on South Main Street is an auto oriented commercial strip that has residential and commercial uses and an inviting feel.

Mr. Rembold said State road is less inviting as it is narrow with a lot overhead wires and very little setback on the south side. The north side is commercial with residential behind.

Mr. Rembold said Maple Avenue to the railroad tracks is a commercial area. There are sidewalks and it is an open area. He said all these areas bear thinking about as transition zones with the understanding that they have different characters.

Mr. Rembold pointed out that zoning bylaw 8.4.2 that allows mixed use by special permit requires that 75% of the street level floor space be designated as non-residential. The Selectboard can reduce that to 50%.

Mr. Hankin said that could be revisited as part of the discussion. He explained that when that language was created there was a project before the boards that needed some zoning to address what the applicant was looking for.

Ms. Nelson agreed there needs to be some tweaking of the bylaws. She asked what the overall goal is. She said she doesn't see a lot of applications for this issue before us. She asked if we have time for this discussion.

Mr. Rembold said the Board might want to wait to deal with this issue. He said perhaps residents should be invited to participate in the discussion.

Mr. Hankin said South Main Street is an area that invites people to walk. It seems natural to increase residential use in that area.

Mr. Musgrove said the B-2 is a zone that limits mixed use by requiring a 1 acre minimum. He said South Main Street has many nice houses that could be maintained with a possible business use.

Mr. Rembold said the current zoning of the area lends itself to large ugly businesses.

Ms. Fowle said it makes her think of reuse of historic structures. She said she would want to discourage that large scale.

Ms. Nelson suggested architectural guidelines might help. She said we don't want to tell people how to use their property.

Mr. Fick said the reuse of historic properties should be encouraged as should multi-use and multi-family by-right.

Mr. Hankin said he is not married to the B-2 zone. He said he would consider the creation of a new zone.

Mr. Rembold said there are design guidelines in place but they are not mandatory.

Mr. Musgrove said he isn't as concerned with what is allowed, just how it looks.

Mr. Rembold said the design guidelines are form based.

Mr. Fick said he didn't think we can have zoning that would prevent an owner from tearing down a building or restrict how the property is used.

Mr. Musgrove said he would like design guidelines that would guide the appearance. He said he would not want South Main Street to look like Stockbridge Road.

Ms. Nelson suggested the Board look at some guidelines.

Mr. Hankin agreed. He said it would be good to look at the guidelines and for the Board to think about what would work in that area.

Ms. Nelson suggested a walking tour of the areas.

Mr. Musgrove agreed that would be a good idea.

Ms. Nelson said it is difficult to deal with aesthetics as everyone has different a different opinion about what things should look like.

Mr. Hankin said we need to focus on zoning, which is the backbone.

Mr. Rembold said the walking tour would be a good idea for everyone to look at what is in each area, think about what you like and don't like, the size, shape, parking availability, what land is available to be built on or what is rundown or potentially a site to be redeveloped. He said to think about the uses you like and what might be prohibited. Get a sense of what should be allowed by-right. Consider the design guidelines to see what is valid and still usable and what isn't.

The Board scheduled the walking tour for September 26 from 3:00-5:00 P.M. The Board will meet at Fairview Outpatient Rehabilitation (the former Condor building) on Maple Avenue.

Mr. Musgrove disconnected at 8:46 P.M.

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

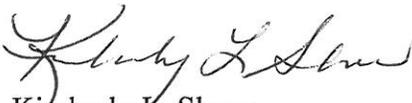
Mr. Rembold told the Board that the ZBA approved the special permit for the Holiday Inn Express.

BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

Ms. Fowle said the Community Preservation Committee had 16 applicants. A summary of the applications will be done and all the applicants that are deemed to be eligible will go on to step two.

Having concluded their business, Mr. Hankin adjourned without objection at 9:06 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Kimberly L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary

Material presented at the meeting:

- Special Permit application 847-15 ExtraSpecialTeas, Inc.
- Memo from Mr. Rembold dated September 9, 2015