

Minutes of the Town of Lee Planning Board
July 11, 2022
6:00pm Via Zoom

A regular meeting of the Lee Planning board was held virtually in accordance with Governor Baker's Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law (MGL Chapter 30A, Section 20) on Monday, July 11, 2022 at 6:00pm on Zoom.

Present: Buck Donovan (Chair), Peg Biron, Matt Carlino, and David Forrest.

Others Present: Gordon Bailey, Jeff Cohen, Kathy Hall, Eileen Peltier, Jon Rudinski, Conrad Decker, Sean Regnier and Bob Jones.

Call to Order

Chairperson Donovan called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. For the record he informed those in attendance that the meeting was being recorded.

Public Comment & Questions for Agenda Items

There were no comments or questions at the time.

Update – Eagle Mill Project

Chairperson Donovan introduced Jeff Cohen representing Eagle Mill Project.

Mr. Cohen stated in July of 2021 the Eagle Mill received funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and went out to bid for construction. Due to Covid related issues the construction costs came in four million dollars higher than the estimated costs submitted to the DHCD. They worked to get more money from DHCD, historic tax credit and the Town of Lee and the project went out to bid again. The construction costs increased to seven million higher than estimated costs.

Mr. Cohen stated they did receive the written authorization from HUD to permit the project to start after an environmental review.

Eileen Peltier introduced herself as the CEO of Berkshire Housing. Ms. Peltier stated the funding gap is approximately 75% supply issues and 25% labor issues. She also stated that when the Eagle Mill was approved by the State for funding, there were several other projects approved and every single one of them has a gap.

Jon Rudinski introduced himself as Principal of Rees Larkin Development who is partnered with Berkshire Housing for the Eagle Mill Project. He clarified that the gap pertains to phase one of the project which consists of 56 units in the main mill building. Mr. Rudinski also stated they are working on additional sources of funding that DHCD is aware of to show their due diligence with the project including Mass Housing.

Mr. Rudinski stated the DHCD has started a mini round application process for all the projects that have construction gaps. There was a pre application last month and there will be a full application submitted in September.

Member Forrest questioned why they are not tearing down the metal buildings in the back rather than the houses.

Mr. Cohen stated in order to enable the infrastructure for phase one to be installed, the demolition of the houses and other structures must happen first. The houses will not come down until the funding for phase one is completely funded.

Mr. Cohen offered to arrange a walk through the site, to anyone interested, to explain the process.

Member Biron requested an update on the project in September.

Member Carlino thanked Mr. Cohen, Ms. Peltier and Mr. Rudinski for attending the meeting and stated encouragement for the project.

Discussion – Master Plan

Chairperson Donovan stated there were a few letters of interest received.

Admin. Assistant confirmed five letters were received.

Chairperson Donovan stated the importance of getting started with the process.

Member Forrest questioned if the Master Plan was going to be updated or completely rewritten.

Chairperson Donovan stated once the committee is formed, they will meet with Berkshire Regional Planning to decide what is best.

Sign Permit – 55 Housatonic Street

Chairperson Donovan stated the application was for a wall sign but a picture was not submitted. The Board discussed the canopy pictures submitted.

Resident Decker stated the application read “revised to have 42-inch trimark” but did not include the image of trimark.

Member Forrest moved that the Planning Board invite the applicant to the next meeting and request more information; Member Carlino seconded. Planning Board voted (4-0). (Carlino – aye; Biron – aye; Forrest – aye; Donovan – aye).

Sign Permit – 165 Housatonic Street

Member Carlino recused.

The Board discussed zoning bylaw Section 4C.2 regarding flashing sign.

The Board discussed size of sign, too large.

Member Biron moved to deny the sign permit for 165 Housatonic Street as presented; Member Forrest seconded. Planning Board voted (3-0). (Biron – aye; Forrest – aye; Donovan – aye).

Approval of Minutes

Member Forrest stated in the Form-A section the minutes should read that the property has water only. Admin. Assistant noted the correction.

Member Carlino moved to accept the minutes as amended for June 27, 2022; Member Biron seconded. Planning Board voted (4-0). (Carlino – aye; Biron – aye; Forrest – aye; Donovan – aye).

Other Topics

The Board discussed the process of the site plan review and special permit hearing for property at 200 Laurel Street. The hearing has been set for August 2, 2022 at 6:00pm.

Chairperson Donovan stated that potential Alternate Member Sherman submitted letter withdrawing application.

Chairperson Donovan stated the Select Board will appoint new Alternate Member Decker at their next meeting.

Member Forrest moved to adjourn meeting; Member Carlino seconded.
Chairperson Donovan declared the meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Mead
Administrative Assistant