

Charlemont Planning Board
September 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes
Charlemont Fairgrounds

Members Participating: Bill Harker Chair, Gisela Walker, Carlene Hayden, Bob Nelson, Jim Sinclair, Dan Miller

Others Participating: Helen and Frank Carcio, Marguerite Willis, Charlie Ricko, Jim Scalise, Wesley Janssen, Joe Pellegrino, Jerry Pratt

Call to Order

Planning Board Chair Bill Harker called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Charlie Ricko to Discuss Re-location of Overwatch Outpost from Main Street to Mohawk Park Building

Charlie Ricko stated that the owner of Mohawk Park Campground, Paul Fantucchio is planning to reduce the size of the restaurant. Mr. Ricko will be renting the front space. He plans to add additional items to his store, including camping gear. He would separate his store from the restaurant by adding a sheetrock wall between the two spaces soon. Walker said this would be a change of use for Paul Fantucchio and Mr. Ricko. Mr. Ricko can apply for a special permit and get a letter of permission from Mr. Fantucchio as the land owner. There is plenty of parking and the current Overwatch Outpost sign would be transferred to the new site. Mr. Ricko presently rents the current retail location and he has outgrown the space.

Planning Board Reorganization

Hayden welcomed Jim Sinclair to the planning board. Hayden moved that Bob Nelson be nominated chair of the planning board. Sinclair seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. Bob Nelson graciously accepted. Sinclair and Walker agreed to take turns with the minutes.

Approval of Minutes

Hayden moved that the minutes for 8/20/20 be approved as written, Walker seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously with an abstention from Sinclair.

River Meeting

Marguerite Willis informed those present that there is going to be a river meeting on the morning of October 17. Invitations are going out and will include among others, river land owners, recreation companies and the planning board. Ms. Willis said that she sees a bright future for the town with more year round recreation activities. They plan to have a battle of the food carts next fall at the fairgrounds. One of the topics for the river meeting will be lack of parking in town.

Wesley Janssen to Discuss Operating a Café/Market at 159 Main Street

Wesley Janssen discussed her plans to purchase the country store at 159 Main Street. Among their vast combined experience, she and her husband have operated a restaurant in New Orleans. They would like to have indoor and outside seating and a seasonal ice creams stand. They will have a market and sell foods inside. Hayden said that if they plan to have indoor seating it may require sprinklers and she should check with the building department. They plan to continue to rent space to the salon. Walker said she should review the current conditions on the special permit for that location. If she is good with the current permit, she can operate under that permit as it comes with the building. Otherwise she can apply for a new special permit. Hayden will supply the permit for her review. She would need a site plan review.

Board Discussion

When no one from Berkshire Rafting appeared for the hearing, Harker called a show of hands as to whether we should wait for a participant or reschedule. The board decided to wait.

Joe Pellegrino thanked the board for their work on improving the situation of the overcrowded animals at 176 Main Street. He said there has been progress and that the geese are gone but he still is being woken up frequently in the very early mornings by various species of animals. Walker said she would send a reminder to Jim Hawkins regarding the September 21 deadline so he will conduct an inspection. Walker also stated the neighbors may need to file a nuisance complaint if they do not see action.

Berkshire Rafting, LLC special permit & site plan review hearing for welcome center/commercial recreation/Tiki bar at 48 Main Street

Harker opened the hearing at 6:50pm. Hayden recused herself as an abutter. Jim Scalise representing Berkshire Rafting LLC passed out site plans for their project at 48 Main Street. The house is currently a rental. They plan to turn the first floor into a welcome center and keep the second floor as a rental apartment. While the welcome center would require a site plan review, the recreational/tiki bar requires a special permit. This hearing is pursuing both permits. He said the submitted site plan includes changes resulting from our comments from the site visit regarding parking and landscaping. There are now 17 parking spaces and a one way entrance/exit. He has discussed the project with the DOT in Lenox and they will keep the current curb cuts. They will have a handicapped and food truck entrance to the rear field. No permanent structure will be located in the field, because it is a flood plain. On the plan, the yellow areas are meadows and wetland flags are marked.

They would serve beer brewed at the Warfield House in a fenced picnic area. The beer concession would be under Berkshire East. The hours of operation of the tiki bar would be 2:00 to dusk. The welcome center would be open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Hayden questioned the low number of parking spaces for both operations and an apartment. Mr. Scalise said that once the parking is full, people will be turned away and parking for the tenants is already there by the garage. Joe Pellegrino said there appear to be 8 picnic tables and 3 smaller tables. Hayden said they will need to check with the Select Board regarding a liquor license.

Jerry Pratt asked about the sidewalk. There will be a new sidewalk as part of the traffic calming roadwork in town. Mr. Pratt said they will need a traffic review. Mr. Scalise said that while the DOT is not interested in performing traffic studies for very small projects such as this, he will try to get a signature approving the plan. He also said there are two properties in separate ownership and they need to be joined. Mr. Scalise said he spoke with Pat Tierney, Civil Highway engineer and was told that the traffic was alright. Mr. Pratt said he needed to have that signed off. He added that the current curb cut may restrict entrance. Mr. Scalise said he is comfortable with the parking.

Because of remaining open questions on traffic, alcohol sales and customers pulling out of the river Mr. Scalise suggested that we consider the site plan review for the building and the special permit for the tiki bar separately, and to move ahead at this point with the welcome center site plan review.

Regarding the site plan review, there are 17 parking spaces and 4 additional spaces for the apartment. The landscaping includes screening with 8 trees. One sign with up-lighting is on the plan. Walker said this needs to be down-lighted and he will need to get us a rendering of the sign. He will need to get us a traffic plan overlaid on the plan. There is a stormwater drain under the lawn shown on the plan. Jerry Pratt said it is not as shown on the map. It is a ditch where the pipe is shown. Mr. Scalise said there is an easement and that a signature is required. There is no change in architecture to the building, but there will be a ramp added to the east side of the building required by code. The first floor is 1300 square feet. Mr. Scalise said there is a formula that DOT uses to determine the parking required, which resulted in 8 spaces for the welcome center and 2 for the apartment and they have more parking for each. Mr. Pratt asked if there

would be handicapped restrooms for men and women. Mr. Scalise said yes and they would also have a front and rear entrance. There will be two people working at the welcome center, but at times only one would be present. Inside would be the kitchen restrooms, desks chairs and an area selling sweatshirts and miscellaneous paraphernalia. The DEP reviewed the water use and approved their plan.

Swimming in the river is not part of the application. Mr. Pratt said he has an issue with bikers on his property and does not allow the bikes on the lawn, but they take up parking spaces and swim.

Helen Carcio said that when three cars are waiting to turn onto the bridge from Route 2 the cars cannot be seen and there have been squealing brakes and accidents. Harker said that the accidents are unrelated to this project. Various safety measures, such as slow down signs, were discussed. Sinclair suggested the Board send a letter to the Select Board re the traffic concerns and asking for a sign alerting drivers to a Dangerous Curve, due to problems and accidents that have occurred when more than three cars try to turn left onto the Long Bridge stopping through traffic.

Hayden confirmed the two lots have different owners and didn't realize the smaller lot was being used. This should have been included in the abutters list. In light of this, Mr. Scalise suggested that they withdraw the special permit and re-apply.

The site plan review is not impacted by the potential lot ownership/merging issue and can go forward. He asked what other issues are related to the special permit so that he can be prepared when they reapply. Mr. Pratt indicated he is opposed to this proposal and is completely against more alcohol use on the river. Harker said it is the alcohol that is the concern and to a lesser extent, swimming. Walker asked when the river is flowing. It flows from 2:00 to 4:00. Walker said perhaps alcohol could be limited to hours after the kayakers have passed. Mr. Scalise will withdraw the special permit application.

Motion:

Sinclair moved that we allow Berkshire Rafting to withdraw the special permit for the recreation area, without prejudice. Miller seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

Motion:

Sinclair moved that the site plan review for the welcome center, excluding the special permit that was withdrawn, be continued to Thursday, September 24 at 5:00 pm. at the Charlemont Fairgrounds. Miller seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The hearing was adjourned at 8:10pm.

Adjournment

At 8:15 pm on a motion by Harker and seconded by Walker; the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Nelson

Documents viewed in the Planning Board meeting of 9/17/2020*

1. Agenda for meeting of 9/17/2020
2. Draft Minutes for 8/20/2020
3. Berkshire Rafting LLC Special Permit and Site Plan Review Applications, Driveway Plans, Permit Plans and supporting documents

*Documents are stored in their respective files