

Minutes to the Meeting of the Berlin Planning Board

13 October 2020

Present: Tim Wheeler, Carolyn MacDonald, Jay Teich, Tom Sanford (Chair)

Absent: Janet Campbell

Meeting via Zoom videoconference, host Liane Leahy

Called to order at 7:30p

Remote participation guidelines explained by Tom

1. Motion to approve minutes from September 22 by Tim

Unanimous approval

2. Appointment of alternate delegate to CMRPC

The Selectboard has declined to appoint an alternate for Tim Wheeler and suggested that a member of the Planning Board be chosen

Jay Teich volunteered, and an informal vote was taken confirming the appointment

3. Sign approval

Benderson Properties (James Biogioli) filed a request for approval of a sign for their new office of Acton Medical at Highland Common.

Tom reported that he reviewed the documents and that the sign appeared to meet all of the requirements of the district.

Motion to approve by Tim with second

Vote: Unanimous approval

4. Monitoring of Affordable Living Units

Metrowest Regional Housing Consultant has engaged in discussion with the town regarding providing monitoring of our affordable housing inventory (SHI).

A proposal was distributed by Margaret and is attached here.

MRHC currently has agreements with Harvard Lancaster Bolton Stow and Hudson.

We would need to apply for their services. We had 118 units and have added 84 related to Riverbridge for an approximate total of 200 units

Approx 1,200 housing units total in town, plus new apartments will bring the total to ~1,600 units including 200 affordable so we would have room for another 400 market rate units to remain within the 10% requirement

We have 84 qualified units at Riverbridge.

Our annual cost for the service may be ~\$16K.

MOTION and Second: "We encourage the Selectboard to pursue engaging this service with vigor and determination."

Discussion: Tim suggested that they might hold vacant units as rentals until they could be remarketed as affordable. We do not need to have a trust established.

Vote: unanimous in favor

5. Warrant articles related to Riverbridge

John Burns, Chris Senie, Matt Senie representing Riverbridge Properties joined the meeting at 8:00p

John Burns is the contract purchaser of lot 9B, 3.7 acres between the café and daycare. Proposal by John is to develop 25 Townhomes in blocks of 2-4.

Chris and Matt are nearing completion of the Riverbridge property since. 11 years from inception, only two parcels remaining (9B and the restaurant pad in front of the hotel).

John presented a plan by Waterman Design. Peak height of the roof is about 27ft, below our 35 foot maximum. Expect to price these in high \$300's to low 400's.

Items discussed with the proponents:

- River bridge needs more use of water (residential) to support the expensive water supply facility.
- Affordable housing discussion- should this project not be required to be subject to the town's requirement for affordable units in >5 unit developments.
- Proponents estimate that the townhomes would have an assessed value of \$10MM vs \$3MM for commercial and would result in 2X tax dollars to town. i.e. from \$89K/yr to \$160K /yr.
- Lack of first floor master suite and single car garage (due to overall width of unit) limit sale price
- Warrant articles would need to be in the Dec 5 Town Meeting which means a Planning Board needs to hold a public hearing soon i.e. mid Nov. Language circulated next week, discuss on the 27th. Hold two meetings in Nov- scratch 10th have meeting and hearing on the 17th
- Citizen's Petition requires 100 signatures and warrant article needs to get to Selectboard in time to be included in the warrant.

Other topics discussed with the Senies:

- A payment of \$100K is due this year but there's no money available. Could instead make a single payment of the entire future \$100K/yr payments at time of closing of the sale of lot 9B. Would ask for NPV rather than total amount of the series of payments.
- Want to ask again for drive through windows for café and gas station at Town Meeting.
- Would like to try to buy a full liquor license for the Village Café. With a full license and a drive up window it would be more valuable, produce more tax revenue.
- They bought Risi meadow and bought easement and will deed that to the town for access to the Assabet river.

Action requested: Bring us some renderings of perspective views from the street looking toward the current apartment buildings at the next meeting (10/25).

MOTION by Tim and seconded:

To hold a public hearing Nov 17 at 8:00p to review zoning warrant articles

Vote: unanimous in favor

6. Con Comm new Bylaw proposal

Will review in January

7. Motion to Adjourn at 10:00pm

VOTE: Unanimous in favor