

Minutes Meeting of January 5, 2005 – Squannacook Hill, MISSIC

Members Present: Shaun Sullivan (MISSIC), Stuart Schulman, Mark Mulligan (MISSIC), Chase Duffy, Jay Prager, Cindy Maxwell (SH), Robert Cadle (SH)

The Chairman reconvened the Squannacook Hills hearing.

Atty. Deschenes said that they have no traffic analysis tonight but there are other issues to discuss. He said that some exemptions apply to them and noted that the engineers will put together detailed earth removal calculations. He said that there is not a lot of earth removal and this is mostly around the construction of buildings and the driveway. He said that even if they are exempt, they still need to apply for an exemption certificate and will apply to the ZBA for that after providing the calculations. He said that he has reviewed the Earth Removal Committee memo and said that they can agree to all the conditions as shown in the memo. He said that otherwise they are not seeking specific waivers.

Mrs. Collette said that on the surface this seems good and she would expect the applicant to comply with the provisions of the Earth Removal By-law, however, she noted that every project along Townsend Road has resulted in very severe erosion problems because of the soil quality. She said that the applicant must take in to account the quality of the soil naturally occurring there. She stressed that even the abutting ANR lot had problems and this project needs careful execution. She said that she has seen terrible washout along Townsend Road and stressed that the Board needs compliance and not a continued public safety headache.

The Chairman asked what the Board needs to do to ensure this.

Mrs. Collette noted that with the Oak Ridge application the Board appointed her as monitor and maybe this could happen here. She said that she is not an abutter but noted that she lives around the corner. She stressed that the builder needs to be very aware and conscientious.

The Chairman said that the Board is likely to appoint her as overseer.

Mrs. Collette noted that in the field it is often easier said than done.

Atty. Deschenes said that he want to discuss the potential impact of the project on the school system and noted that he has quoted a study done by UMass regarding impact of projects on schools. He said that because the study is dated from 1980, some feel that it is somewhat outdated but noted that generally the study determined that a 2 bedroom dwelling will generate between 0.1 and 0.3 children per unit. He said Chapa has done a study of eastern and central Mass kids and how to house to house them. He said that from 2 to 7 school age children would be generated by this project.

The Chairman noted that DHCD doesn't care how many kids are added.

Atty Deschenes said that Mr. Kelly, engineer, would be going over some changes in the plans and noted that they are meeting with the Con. Comm. soon.

Mr. Kelly said that the project is smaller in scale but has the same number of units. He said that the guardrail has been extended and trash racks have been added. He said that more screening has been added and said that there are signs showing where snow should be stored. He said that there is a crosswalk across Townsend Road and noted that how they tie into the water line will be modified. He said that as long as DEP standards are met the quality of town water and ground water will be protected. He said that there are conservation posts with signs to prevent homeowners from encroaching on the resource area. He said that three trees currently on the site will remain and be clearly marked.

Discussion ensued regarding the tight area where the cul de sac starts.

Mr. Kelly said that grass areas can have a steeper grade than pavements and because of the topography they need that configuration.

Mrs. Duffy said that it seems unreasonably complicated.

The Chairman went over the PB memo, noting that #3, sidewalks, have been taken care of. He then asked about the benefits of granite curbing.

Mr. Wilson, PB, said that granite helps to keep things in line, particularly with such steep topography.

Mr. Paige said that granite is ten times more expensive.

The Chairman said that that can be handled with the pro forma review.

Mr. Kelly said #4 was done in conjunction with comments from fire and police.

The Chairman noted that it #5, it is not a subdivision and said that #6 is Savos Danos' area of expertise.

Atty. Deschenes said that that was discussed at the 11/3 meeting and the town's consulting engineer said that it won't affect the neighbors.

Mr. Kelly said that the post rate development runoff will be less than the pre development runoff and thus there is no impact.

Mrs. Collette noted that it is not just quantity but also quality.

Mr. Kelly said that the site was designed under State storm water management standards.

Mrs. Collette asked whether there would be any controls over herbicide, pesticide, etc use.

Mr. Pine said that there was legislation passed for the Squannacook River sanctuary and noted that there are higher standards under these State requirements. He said that the Board should check that the project meets these standards.

Atty. Deschenes said that he would look into it.

Mr. Kelly said that #7 is designed for a steep slope.

He said in #8 the basins are 55 feet from Townsend Road and runoff will not exceed post limits from pre limits.

He noted that in #10, there are 3 chamber storage tanks and that trash racks have been added.

In #11, Mr. Kelly said that there is signage on site that shows where to store snow and said he will look into removal.

Discussion ensued regarding the number of dumpsters in #12. Mr. Kelly noted that the ZBA wanted two so that disposal is easier for residents.

In #13 the PB does ask for information and Mr. Kelly said that all utilities are shown on the plan.

Mrs. Collette said that the plan shows the utilities running right down the middle of road and noted that that could be a problem.

Atty. Deschenes said that they will address moving the utilities.

The Chairman said that he likes the number of units suggested in #14, and said that the Board needs to review the pro forma.

Atty. Deschenes referenced #15 and noted they have spent a lot of time designing the roadway to address the steep topography. He said that the plan has been changed several times.

Pursuant to #16, discussion ensued regarding the number of floors and building height vs. topography, ie 35 feet at the top of the hill will be looming. Of note: the buildings are 37 feet.

Mrs. Collette said that maybe one dorm at Groton school is more than 35 feet, and that required a variance from ZBA. She stressed that no structures in town are more than 35 feet.

Atty. Deschenes said that he will verify if 37 ft. is accurate.

He said that they will take #17 under advisement.

The PB suggested in #18 that all units be rentals and the applicant said no.

In #19, a list of more information is needed by the PB. Atty. Deschenes said that he will have a preliminary septic plan and will submit ASAP to the ZBA and BOH. He said that there would be wall lights on each unit and no street lights, although the applicant is willing put in post lamps if the ZBA wants. Discussion ensued regarding this and the Chairman said that he thinks there should be a couple of lights. Discussion ensued regarding the landscaping plan, which will need further development.

The ZBA agreed with #20, that the applicant attend a PB meeting. Atty. Deschenes said that he will discuss this with his client.

The Chairman said that he expects more detailed waiver requests (#21), and Atty. Deschenes said that he is working on it.

The Chairman said that #22, more comments from the PB are welcomed.

Atty. Deschenes said that he wants to go over what additional things need to be done. Of note: traffic and pro forma review. He said that he will submit one and forward it to Mike Jacobs.

The hearing was continued to 2/2/05 at 7:30 pm.

John Strauss of W. Groton said that he was interested in funds for Cutler Field.

The Chairman explained that the ZBA decides where to allocate any extra money.

The Chairman reconvened MISSIC.

Atty. Collins submitted a full site plan review plan, with topographical lines, etc. He noted that they have been before the ZBA 3 times and noted that 50% of the units are rental and go toward the affordable housing count. He said that 36 units are restricted to 55 and over and stressed that the site is a very unsightly gravel pit that his client will fix up.

The Chairman likened the topography of the site to being on the moon.

Atty. Collins said that they have well demonstrated that this is a good use for both the site the town. He said that it is now up to the ZBA to decide if is a nice idea and said that he wants to know where the board wants to go from here.

The Chairman read the PB memo into the record.

Discussion ensued regarding moving the shooting range, which is more of a special permit issue than one of site plan review.

Atty. Collins suggested 3 conditions: mandate them to work with police and fire to move the range, mandate that they develop as part of site plan review submission a suitable visual and sound barrier, as discussed. (He said that even if the range is moved 1 mile away they will need a sound barrier.) Finally, the third condition is that they work with the Housing Authority such that the requisite rental units are restricted to age and affordability, etc.

The Chairman went over the by-law, noting that they are way below the 5,000 square foot requirement and that there are no abutting properties with structures.

Mr. Pine said that the 12 space parking issues is a little hard to define, although it seems that they do that and also provide double the parking that is required.

The Chairman said that a lot of the design issues are under site plan review as well. He noted that outdoor lighting shall meet the requirement in the by-law. Atty Collins said that there is plenty of visibility and no sidewalk issues.

Discussion ensued regarding the shifting around of dirt on the site.

Mrs. Collette said that this is such a meaningful improvement, noting that this is a unique piece of land that is not in it's natural state. She said that the project couldn't be done without moving land around and said that the Board can't force them to abide by the 5% grading and not removing fill off site. She said that the Earth Removal Committee would grant the necessary waivers to allow the project to move forward.

Mr. Pine said that there will be a well on site to feed the man made pond.

Discussion ensued regarding how to create lotteries and Atty. Collins said that that is done through the Housing Authority.

Atty. Collins said that there is some good language in the letter of August 2004.

Of note: the PB site walk is scheduled on Saturday at 9 am.

Further discussion ensued regarding moving the shooting range.

The Board moved to close the public hearing for MISSIC/Patierno. The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

The Board moved to approve the application of MISSIC Realty Trust under 218-27B and subject to the above conditions. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.