

Approved 4/7/15

CITY OF ROCKLAND
PLANNING BOARD
Minutes of Meeting
March 3, 2015

Board Present: Chairman E. Laustsen, W. Bodine, C. Jordan, A. Knickelbein, and P. vanVuuren

Board Absent: None

Staff Present: Code Officer J. Root and Secretary D. Sealey

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:17 P.M. and reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment: None

Communications: CEO Root had distributed an email he received from Bob Stafford and Patricia Sampson relating concerns about storm water run-off they felt was caused by impervious surfaces at the Navigator.

1. New Business:

Liberty Hospitality of Maine, LLC (Navigator Motor Inn) – 520 Main Street – Subdivision Application to Convert 8 Motel Rooms into 3 Condominium Units - Map 4-A-3: Architect John Hansen represented the applicant. He said this Subdivision Application was a continuation of the work begun by converting 9 hotel rooms into 3 condominium units last year. This application would convert 8 hotel rooms into two 2-bedroom units and one 1-bedroom unit; there would be three balconies for each 2-bedroom unit and two for the 1-bedroom unit. A triangular space next to unit 7 would be used for storage.

Ms. vanVuuren inquired about previously discussed drainage problems on the property. Mr. Hansen said that owner Bob Liberty's position was that his motel had done nothing to the physical site to influence drainage in 28 years. He said the current problems were the result of city work on the sidewalk. Ms. vanVuuren countered that she was not sure there weren't existing problems prior to that. Mr. Root stated that, as far as he knew, the drainage issues started after the city's work was completed. He asked if there was a simple solution the Navigator could provide. Mr. Hansen responded that perhaps the city could hire an engineer to look at it.

CEO Root reported that City Attorney Kevin Beal had never received replacement condominium documents for those he had rejected for the last Navigator subdivision. Mr. Hansen said Attorney Wayne Crandall was supposed to deliver them: he would call Mr. Crandall.

Ms. vanVuuren asked if the PB could request the city look at the drainage issue. Mr. Jordan said this was something for Stafford and Sampson to go to the city about, as it was not Mr. Liberty's problem. Mr. Hansen said the run-off had been slightly reduced in the last year.

Chair Laustsen said the parking spaces for proposed Units 7, 8, and 9 at the back of the building were completely open to the residences behind the motel. Mr. Hansen said that had been the situation for more than 40 years; however, he would see if Mr. Liberty would put a fence from Talbot Ave. to Space #7.

Chair Laustsen lead a review of the Elements. He inquired about financial capability and was told by the architect that a letter from the bank would be submitted with the final application. Ms. vanVuuren asked that the sewer line connection be shown on the plan. Mr. Hansen confirmed that the covenant documents would be provided to the City Attorney.

Chair Laustsen opened and closed the Public Hearing at 5:52 P.M.: no one spoke.

ACTION: Mr. Jordan made a motion to approve the preliminary plan.
Carried 5-0-0

2. Approve Minutes of the 12/2/14 Meeting:

ACTION: Ms. vanVuuren made a motion to approve the minutes of the 12/2/14 meeting.
Carried 4-0-1 (Ms. Knickelbein abstained)

3. Form Based Code – A Discussion with Audra Caler Bell Regarding the Planning Board's Involvement in the Process: Community Development Director Caler Bell said consideration of utilizing the Form-Based Code [FBC] in Rockland had started with the city's study of a new vision for Camden Street. She said there were two components to FBC: the public corridor and land use changes to support the vision. The Comprehensive Planning Commission had decided to use FBC on Camden St. and Park and Payne between Broadway to the Thomaston line.

Ms. Caler Bell said she came to the PB because this code change would have a direct impact on the board. She wanted the PB to be engaged in the process and to have a chance to comment on FBC. She expected the timeframe for implementation to be six months.

Ms. vanVuuren asked the Community Development Director what she saw as the benefits and challenges of FBC. Ms. Caler Bell responded that zoning focused on the use of buildings, while the FBC focused on how buildings related to each other. Implementing FBC would emphasize upfront planning at the parcel level, with a major emphasis on dealing with property owners during that stage.

Ms. Knickelbein ascertained that FBC was being used in Falmouth and Freeport to redevelop classic strips. Ms. Knickelbein questioned how that would work in Rockland with its old, established commercial corridor. CEO Root said the City Council had placed an overlay on Camden St. and noted that FBC was very much like the Neighborhood Commercial zone proposed by the Comprehensive Planning Commission and turned down by the Council a few years ago.

Chair Laustsen asked how FBC could help cover up ugly buildings. Ms. Caler Bell replied that design would be additional and FBC was more about how buildings related to each other and how they sat on the plot: emphasis was on how buildings functioned physically, rather than their use.

Ms. vanVuuren commented that people did not understand the science of green buildings. Ms. Caler Bell said that sustainable building design would come later.

Ms. Knickelbein asked if there was talk of improving downtown parking. Ms. Caler Bell responded that there was a Parking Committee and agreed that parking was a huge issue that would affect the FBC.

Mr. Bodine urged the Community Development Director to keep the City Council informed because it would be necessary for three members to be supportive. Ms. Caler Bell said she wanted to keep the PB informed and receive input from it during the process. Mr. Bodine commented that the process of having Comps go directly to the City Council, thus by-passing the PB, had never set well with him.

There was discussion of informing the public about FBC. Ms. Sealey thought it was crucial to involve all tax-payers so they understood the implications for their city, their properties, and their taxes. CEO Root thought perhaps information and/or notices of meetings could be posted on Facebook or the city's website.

John Hansen said it was necessary to tell people that what we had now couldn't solve Camden Street's problems. He said we all needed to understand what FBC is and see some examples of how it has worked. Ms. vanVuuren was not convinced there was buy-in for FBC within the community yet.

4. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:58 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Sealey
Recording Secretary