AGENDA ITEM #1: Public Comments

Hammer called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM.

Hammer read the Remote Public Meeting notice due to the state of emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The notice explained that this public meeting was held electronically, recorded via Microsoft Teams and available to the public.

Hammer announced that Justin St. James has submitted his resignation from the committee due to his other commitments. Hammer expressed the gratitude on behalf of the committee for all his contributions to the work of the committee.

Schibler provided some explanations and clarifications for open meeting rules for remote meetings. He also passed along the recommendation of town staff that committees do not make any major decisions during these remote meetings if they can be avoided or postponed until after the pandemic is over.

AGENDA ITEM #2: Agenda Changes and Approval

There were no changes to the agenda.

BOTULA MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY COLEMAN, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. THE MOTION PASSED 4-0.

AGENDA ITEM #3: Development Review

5/14/2020 Planning Commission Meeting

1. 86 Center Rd (continued)

Schibler explained the design team came back with revisions based on the October 2019 hearing when the Planning Commission said they would like the building positioned further back and have more separation between the Burger King building and the main plaza for safety reasons, as well as additional landscaping. The new plans show a 20’ landscaped island between the building and the rest of the site. The landscape plans show littleleaf linden trees as well as dogwoods and spiraea plantings in the landscape island. Staff is concerned with the extra drive aisle between the landscaping and the
parking/building that seems extraneous and creates a traffic hazard to the north and south of the aisle where traffic converges. Town staff is going to suggest the landscaping be moved to be next to the building and move the drive aisle and parking lot to the east of the landscaping which will reduce the traffic hazards but will also move the traffic pattern which will also reduce the impact on the wetland to the northwest of the building. Schibler also explained the architecture has been revised to try to mimic the rest of the plaza, as required in the design standards.

Hammer asked if there would be any problem with the truck lane coming from the rear of the Price Chopper building down to the south into the parking area and traffic circulation pattern for the Burger King building. Schibler said staff had considered this during their review and noted that the number of trucks during the day is limited and predicted that the majority of Burger King traffic will go through the drive-through, which would be less impacted by the truck traffic.

2. 84 Susie Wilson Rd (continued)

Schibler explained the plans are essentially the same as what has been reviewed previously but they have taken two of the lots that were going to be on the west side of the property which would have had their own driveway and consolidated them into other lots and made everyone use access off the new private road that will be constructed. Staff is concerned that the new plans show a steep driveway for lots 2 and 3, and staff will be requesting they consolidate them into a duplex to eliminate the need for such a steep driveway to those lots.

Staff had previously reviewed the proposed public access to the scenic waterfall area which would provide the developers with the density bonus. It was decided that it was not a great idea for the developers to provide parking and maintain a trail for the public to access the waterfall. So instead, the developers are converting two of the duplex units on the existing dwelling to affordable housing units to achieve the bonus.

Hammer asked whether the pandemic will be affecting the construction proposals for all plans. Schibler explained that most projects that were already in progress will likely keep going, but due to a general slowdown of engineering firms and other businesses there might be a reduction in new applications for now.

Schibler explained that for this project, the PC had requested the design team consolidate all lots further to use space more efficiently and create more of a neighborhood feel, which would also reduce the impact on the rest of the overall site for things like cut/fill operations and other construction activities.

Jones asked about the 1 LeClerc Woods project and when it would be discussed at a Planning Commissions meeting. Schibler explained that it is a new application and will be discussed at the May 14th meeting along with some other new projects. Discussions ensued with general information about the 1 LeClerc Woods project and another proposed new project in the Essex Experience complex behind the Hammerfit gym. Schibler noted the Planning Commission meeting will be warned as always, and he will be sure to make the CTC aware of any new applications prior to the PC meeting.
AGENDA ITEM #4: Clean Up Day Preparations

Hammer explained that the decision was made to cancel the Spring Clean Up Day at Indian Brook Reservoir. All committee members expressed their agreement with this decision.

Jones asked whether we could encourage people to remove buckthorn from either Indian Brook or their own properties. Hammer noted we would not want to encourage people to remove invasives at Indian Brook without supervision or proper disposal but agreed that we could try to get the word out to try to clean up invasives from their own properties. Schibler highlighted the public online courses available, particularly those hosted by county forester Ethan Tapper, and suggested they could be discussed in a post for Front Porch Forum or the Essex Parks and Rec Facebook page.

COLEMAN MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY JONES, TO CANCEL THE SPRING CLEAN UP DAY. THE MOTION PASSED 4-0.

AGENDA ITEM #5: Saxon Hill Management Plan

Schibler explained that he has had time recently to work on the Saxon Hill Management Plan document. He has reached out to the Parks and Recreation department for feedback but is aware of their other professional and personal time commitments and does not expect to receive feedback in the near future. Once normal operations resume, he will also reach out to other departments/stakeholders, but the Parks and Recreation department will likely have the most input to the document.

AGENDA ITEM #6: EAB Grant

Schibler explained that the town and village decided with Vermont Urban and Community Forestry to postpone any work on the grant until next spring since the time was allowed through the grant and the Public Works department is currently very busy with other constraints and would struggle to complete the work this year. Schibler suggested the town may still try to remove the rural trees this fall if we can get them marked, but this depends on many factors. Schibler will follow up with Chuck Vile now that groups of two are allowed to work.

Discussions ensued regarding the impact on the Public Works department and their potential backlog of work resulting from this pandemic and how that might affect this project and other work.

AGENDA ITEM #7: Work Plan and Calendar Check

Hammer noted that due to the low membership numbers of the committee and constraints of working remotely, we should put discussions of work plan items on hold temporarily. Schibler noted any sub-committee discussions such as revisions to landscaping ordinances can continue but agreed that most other projects will be on hold for now.

Jones asked about the status of Tree City USA designation, now that the Arbor Day celebration has been cancelled and whether there was anything else that could or should be done now to work towards the Tree City USA designation. Botula noted there were three items outstanding for Tree City USA - Arbor Day celebration, the proclamation by the Selectboard and the tree ordinance. He thought the policy
provided by the Village would suffice for the Tree City USA application. Schibler reviewed an email he received saying the requirement for the Arbor Day celebration has been waived so all that needs to be done is the tree ordinance and the budgetary requirements. Schibler will review the requirements and Botula volunteered to complete any work on the tree ordinance that would be required.

Coleman asked about the trail caretakers program and whether Parks and Rec would be able to provide further information about the program. Schibler said they would be willing to provide information but might be a little busy currently but he would be willing to provide information if needed.

**AGENDA ITEM #8: Minutes**

COLEMAN MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY BOTULA, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 10, 2020. THE MOTION PASSED 4-0.

**AGENDA ITEM #9: Reading File**

Schibler noted the Selectboard reaffirmed their support for the Farm and Open Lands Contracts. He also noted a press release from the town that all parks and park amenities are currently closed due to the pandemic. However parks trails remain open as long as they are used in a safe manner (i.e., maintaining a safe distance, wearing masks, etc.). And lastly noted the Vermont Fish and Wildlife workshop series, as well as other online seminars available to the public.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.

BOTULA MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY JONES, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED 4-0.