

Auburn Planning Board Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2019

ROLL CALL:

Regular Members present: Evan Cyr – Presiding, Dustin Boutin, Marc Tardif, Stephen Martelli and Brian Carrier

Regular Members absent: Samuel Scogin and Nathan Hamlyn

Associate and other Members present: 2 Vacant Positions

Associate and other Members absent:

Also present representing City staff: Eric Cousens Deputy Director of Economic & Community Development and Audrey Knight, Auburn City Planner

Chairperson Cyr called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and asked for a roll call. He then asked for a motion on the minutes.

MINUTES:

February 12, 2019 Meeting Minutes Approval Request

A motion was made by Brian Carrier and seconded by Marc Tardif to approve the February 12, 2019 meeting minutes as presented. After a vote of 5-0-0, the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS and PUBLIC HEARING:

a. Special Exception & Site Plan Review for Evergreen Subaru Sales & Service Center at 649 Turner Street in the General Business zoning district.

Chairperson Cyr explained the process of Planning Board meetings and asked Audrey to present the staff report.

Audrey went over the proposal and presented slides via PowerPoint. Chairperson Cyr asked several questions regarding landscaping and lighting which were answered by City staff.

(16:25 on Recording)

Mike Gotto of Stoneybrook Consultants and Doug Weisz, owner of Evergreen Subaru, added further information regarding the proposal. They then answered several questions from Board members.

(57:30 on Recording)

Open Public Input

A motion was made by Brian Carrier and seconded by Stephen Martelli to open the public input part of the hearing. After a vote of 5-0-0, the motion carried.

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William Sylvester of 1128 Riverside Drive said we should be thinking about garages because the more stacked up you have them, the more you eliminate snow plowing, summer heat and storm drain run-off.

Ms. Clark, abutter on the deed asked if noise levels from mechanics working would impact abutters. Mr. Gotto replied that all mechanic work would be done inside the building and the garage doors will be kept shut because they will have a climate-controlled building. Ms. Clark questioned the drainage and retention pond on the site and Mr. Gotto explained the wetland mitigation site was moved to the Dingley site and what's on the site now are 2 stormwater systems.

Jason Williams from Longhorn Restaurant said he has nothing but full support of this as it will bring more people in the area which is good for his and other area restaurants.

A motion was made by Brian Carrier and seconded by Stephen Martelli to close the Public Input part of the hearing. After a vote of 5-0-0, the motion carried.

A discussion ensued amongst Board members, City staff and the applicants.

(01:14:45 on Recording)

A motion was made by Brian Carrier to approve Evergreen Subaru's request for a Special Exception and Site Plan approval for a proposed auto Sales and Service Center at 649 Turner Street (former Best Buy), in the General Business zoning district and treating the parking as an inventory holding area. Approval is subject to conditions 1-4 in the staff report dated March 9, 2019.

Chairperson Cyr amended the motion to include the following 2 conditions; Condition #5, That the lighting plan be amended to avoid spillage on Mount Auburn Avenue & Condition #6, Lighting on lot 4 be capable of being dimmed outside of regular business hours.

The amendment of the motion was accepted by Mr. Carrier and seconded by Marc Tardif. After a vote of 5-0-0, the motion carried.

WORK SESSION: Mayor's Action Group on Agriculture and Resource Protection (MAG-ARP) current draft changes to the Agriculture and Resource Protection Zoning District.

Chairperson Cyr explained how Planning Board work sessions work and stated members of the community would be allowed to make comments.

Audrey went over the outline for the work shop and presented slides via PowerPoint.

(01:45:00 on Recording)

Chairperson Cyr asked the representative of the Ad Hoc committee to give a synopsis of the committee's results.

Peter Moore, land owner and a member of the Mayor's Action Committee explained the process of the committee and subsequent conclusions, resolutions and suggestions from the committee.

(01:59:20 on Recording)

A lengthy discussion ensued amongst Board members and City staff and the following is a summary of the discussion as written by Audrey Knight:

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Planning Board members stated that there were a few non-negotiable issues that they would consider in looking at any amendment to the Agriculture and Resource Protection Zone:

- *A reduction in the 50% income rule should be addressed – it is not appropriate in this era*
- *It does not promote residential use- must remain accessory to agriculture*
- *It must not spur sprawl or growth in the rural areas of the city*
- *It must not favor either small scale or large-scale agriculture – neither should be negatively impacted by a change in the code*
- *Forestry and other conservation use may need to be considered differently, as the unintended consequences have resulted in 75% forested land that is now home to wildlife populations. Large tree farming and / or development will push wildlife into farming operations and / or urban areas, resulting in dramatic loss in wildlife populations and hunting grounds*

The Planning Board also requested to hear from experts and to get some input or answers in a second workshop before holding a Public Hearing on Draft Language and then making a recommendation. They are looking for:

- *A sound understanding of just how many parcels a change would affect, in what way and where, would have to be analyzed before a recommendation could be rendered*
- *Recommendations from the experts on “What constitutes a legitimate farming operation as opposed to a “garden” or home with an expensive hobby”?*
- *What have other communities done that have faced the same issue?*
- *What recommendations did the consultant study and Ad Hoc committee make?*
- *Is there a threshold for police, fire and schools and road volumes that trigger city expenditures to meet changing land uses and population density?*

More than 22 residents attended the workshop and 7 people contributed to the discussion.

The 7 people that spoke were:

William Sylvester, 1128 Riverside Drive
Dan Herrick, 470 Hatch Road
Cathy Shaw, 4 Seasons market
Dave McKeon, Steele Road property owner
Michelle Melaragno, Trapp Road property owner
Chris Carson, Ag Zone land owner
Mike Pelletier, Pownal Road property owner

Comments shared with the Planning Board included:

- *The Mayor’s committee unanimously voted to have an Agriculture Advisory Board*
- *The 50% rule has hurt some people trying to get operations started and those that spoke thought the rule should be changed*

- *It was stated that the 50% income rule has never really been policed from an on-going operations perspective and has only come up when someone buys an old farmhouse with the intent of just living there. It was further stated that the monitoring of income as a basis would face the same implementation hurdles that currently exist.*
- *Several people spoke that were on the previous Ad Hoc committee from 2017-2018. They stated that they also had a unanimous recommendation to have an Ag Advisory Board to assist in the interpretation and administration of any of the proposed changes to income and acreage. They also expressed that the current effort did not pick up their work and the work of the consultants who mapped a path forward.*
- *Concern was expressed over the healthy animal populations and the need to also have conservation resources, not just “farming”*
- *Concern was expressed over breaking up land into smaller and smaller lots that would break up trails and hunting grounds*
- *Several people expressed that this current effort went too fast, that agreement wasn’t reached, and that more deliberation and information is needed before acting.*
- *The concept of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR’s) was brought up as a means of allowing large legacy land owners to “cash-out” on their land without losing the land area to development, solving some of the issues with the zone.*
- *Emergency response times were raised regarding city services. That that should be a consideration for population distribution*
- *A person spoke about his cattle operation not meeting the 50% income rule, thereby making it impossible for him to build a home, which has caused vandalism and theft*

(02:36:30 on Recording)

Chairperson Cyr thanked everyone for their comments. A discussion ensued regarding what would be happening going forward.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Staff updates on upcoming projects:

1. Court Street All-Modes Mobility Alternatives Analysis RFP – AVCOG funded.
Audrey went over the proposal and gave a timeline of the process.

2. Shoreland Zone update to conform with State Timber Harvest Ordinance
Audrey explained the subject and answered questions

PUBLIC COMMENT:

William Sylvester, 1128 Riverside Drive spoke about shoreland zoning.

Leroy Walker of 41 Broad Street said he was upset that New Auburn was not included in the walkability & bicycle study. Eric explained why the Court Street study funding did not include N/A at this time.

(02:59:00 Recording)

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Brian Carrier and seconded by Stephen Martelli to adjourn. After a vote of 5-0-0, the motion carried.