

Auburn Planning Board Meeting Minutes April 9, 2019

ROLL CALL:

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

Regular Members absent: None

Associate and other Members present: Katherine Boss and John Engler

Associate and other Members absent: None

Also present representing City staff: Audrey Knight, Auburn City Planner

Chairperson Cyr called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and asked for a roll call.

MINUTES:

None at this time

Chairperson Cyr presented Robert Bowyer a certificate recognizing him for all his years on the Planning Board and also recognizing his time as a member of the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Chairperson Cyr then welcomed 2 new alternate members of the Planning Board, Katherine Boss and John Engler and explained what their roles are as Associate members.

NEW BUSINESS and PUBLIC HEARING:

Site Plan Review for 101 Merrow Road, Futureguard, Inc., Phase 2 Factory Expansion in the Industrial 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. No questions were asked from Board members to City staff.

(09:30 on Recording)

Mike Gotto of Stoneybrook Consultants said he did not have anything to add to the presentation. He answered a couple of questions from Board members.

Open Public Input

A motion was made by Sam Scogin and seconded by Stephen Martelli to open the public input part of the hearing. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

A motion was made by Sam Scogin and seconded by Stephen Martelli to close the Public Input part of the hearing. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

A motion was made by Sam Scogin and seconded by Brian Carrier to approve the request by Futureguard Holdings, LLC, for Site Plan and Special Exception approval, for a 14,160 square foot expansion to an existing developed building complex, and an expanded truck circulation area around the west and north sides of the site at 101 Merrow Road located in an Industrial Zone, in accordance with Sec. 60-45 and 60-578 (35) with the conditions A through D as listed in the staff report dated April 9, 2019. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

(15:50 on Recording)

WORKSHOP: Agriculture and Resource Protection Zoning District Informational Q & A discussion of issues and options.

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

Audrey went over the outline for the work shop and introduced Stephanie Gilbert and Mark Hedrich from the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Ms. Gilbert presented several slides on the projector while speaking about the definition of a “farm”.

(35:00 on Recording)

Mr. Hedrich continued the presentation about farms in Maine and specifically went over “Operations & Management”. Both Ms. Gilbert and Mr. Hedrich answered questions from Board members.

(01:18:15 on Recording)

Audrey completed the presentation with slides summarizing the findings from the 2017-18 Consultant & the AD HOC work on AG. She concluded the presentation with the City Council directive to the Planning Board.

(01:31:00 on Recording)

Questions from Board members were answered by Audrey. Chairperson Cyr then opened it up for public comment. The following people spoke:

(01:38:45 on Recording)

Mary Sylvester of 208 Maple Hill Road and Chair elected for the taskforce that worked with Crossroads Research Center said she wanted to reiterate Ms. Gilbert’s comments about the importance of the feedback from farmers.

Terry Dailey of 1054 North River Road and a member of the same taskforce as Ms. Sylvester said he drove to all the streets in Auburn and suggested that everyone do the same and determined there were approximately 100 lots that were buildable. He suggests that any vacant lot of 10 acres or more that existed at the end of 2017 be able to have a house built on it. He figured there were only about 63 lots that this would apply to. He mentioned that building a new farm is very expensive and would welcome any tax incentives for new farmers.

Bronte Roberts of 736 South Witham Road said she is the 9th generation farmer in Maine and suggested that everyone read the report that the Bates students put together and spoke about socio-economic growth and ecological diversity

(01:46:45 on Recording)

Denis Wheeler who lives in Pownal and grew up in Auburn, said he would like to build a retirement home on a 3-acre piece of land in the AG zone and would like this committee to consider that as they make their decisions.

Shelley Kruszewski, Executive Director of Androscoggin Land Trust (ALT) and resident of Seventh Street in Auburn, wanted to clarify to the Planning Board and to the community at large what ALT's role is going forward. She read ALT's mission and described its role in protecting the natural resources in Auburn.

(01:54:45 on Recording)

Michelle Melaragno, owner of AG zone property on Trapp Road, spoke about urban sprawl and response times from emergency services in the outlying areas of the AG zone properties. She mentioned that the 1st Ad Hoc Committee unanimously voted to have an AG Commission but said that was swept under the rug. She said she would like to see that no changes are made or considered to the AG zone until after that AG Commission is in place or as an alternative maybe can roll the AG Commission into the already existing Conservation Commission as the AG zone should be something that's conserved. She wonders how many already in the AG zone are operating agricultural businesses on their properties and have been in existence for 3-5 years. She said there are several who do want to build on their properties and suggests giving priority to the folks who have been farming on their land for so long the ability to finally build on that land.

Cindy Lynch from Farmingdale, Maine and one of 3 students from Bates College that worked on the Ag zone project that has been mentioned said the final 60-page report will be completed in 2 weeks and be made available to the public. She handed out maps to Board members.

Susan Melcher of 736 South Witham Road and teacher with the Auburn School Department, said Auburn is one of the best places to live in the State of Maine. She suggested we need to build a strong sense of community and look to other cities like Augusta and Waterville who are revitalizing their downtowns and said we could do the same to attract young families to the area.

Julie Harper of Lewiston and coordinator for the Good Food Council of Lewiston Auburn spoke about the Good Food Council and its connection with the AG zone topic. She asked that they consider the creation of the AG Advisory Board before the final draft is put in place.

(02:09:50 on Recording)

Keith Emerson owner of properties on Hobart Road and Sopers Mill Road asked if the maps that were shown available on the City's website and Audrey explained they were on the AG Portal and Planning Board areas of the website.

Peter Moore, land owner of property on Jordan School Road and a member of the Mayor's Action Committee commented that one of the fundamental issues here is an issue of fairness and said the ordinance that was created over 60 years ago created two classes of land owners, the land owners who

were living on their land when the ordinance was created and the land owners who did not have a residence on their land. Those who did were grandfathered of all the land-use regulations so over time, there's been a resentment developed between the 2 groups and that's partly why there's motivation for action today. He said the ordinance should be changed in a way that on a going-forward basis, all of the land owners in the AG zone are treated the same way. He said one way to do that would be to put a sunset on the exemptions that the grandfathered land owners, those that had residences on their land before the ordinance was enacted, so eventually those properties also become subject to the ordinance at large. He also spoke about the potential for economic activity and concluded by saying he thinks there's been enough studies and reports and committees and the like, so now is the time that some decisions are made and asked the Board to take into consideration this fairness issue.

Gentleman who owns property on Jordan School Road said in response to the fairness issue, he recently purchased a second lot on Jordan School Road and did not think he's being treated unfairly. The price was inexpensive because of the zoning which he knew at the time was unbuildable and he was ok with that as he prefers to keep it preserved as forest. He spoke about the Bates student's presentation which showed the population declining even though there was major development happening in the rural residential areas and sees that pattern continuing.

(02:19:00 on Recording)

Chairperson Cyr thanked everyone for sharing their ideas, concerns and thoughts.

NEW BUSINESS and PUBLIC HEARING:

Continued...

Staff and Marijuana Committee initiated proposed amendment to Article XIII, Environmental Performance Standards, Section 60-1038. Odors.

Chairperson Cyr said that due to the late hour and worsening weather outside, this public hearing may not be heard tonight. He asked members of the audience if anyone came specifically for the odor ordinance and seeing none, he said it would be taken up at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No comments

MISCELLANEOUS:

Staff updates on upcoming projects:

None

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Stephen Martelli and seconded by Brian Carrier to adjourn. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.