

**TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

January 4, 2022

7:00 P.M.

Municipal Building, Council Room

PRESENT:

Steve St. Pierre, Vice Chairman
Harvey Austin
Jeff McCabe
Derek Chretien
Dan Luce, Alternate
Joel Greenwood, Planner
Cynthia Kirk, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Steve Conley, Chairman, Stephen Gould, Secretary, Matt Smith

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Bryan Belliveau, Code Enforcement Officer	Christine Demo
Jason Gayne	Mark Demo
Will Haskell, Gorrill Palmer	Dan Diffin, Sevee & Maher Engineers
Lester Kenway, Appalachian Trail Club President	

• **QUORUM:**

Planning Board Meeting called to order at 7:00 P.M. Quorum was present.

2) **MINUTES OF THE December 7, 2021 PLANNING BOARD MEETING TO BE APPROVED:**

Motion by Jeff McCabe to approve the December 7, 2021 Planning Board meeting minutes, as written. Seconded by Dan Luce. Motion passed 3-0-1. (Harvey Austin abstained)

3) **SITE PLAN / SUBDIVISION:**

A) Discussion of the Site Inventory & Analysis submitted by Gorrill Palmer on behalf of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club for the proposed Trail Center to be located on Malbons Mills Road (Assessor's Map 5, Lot 116).

Will Haskell from Gorrill Palmer gave a brief presentation on the project. He said this project is to develop the Appalachian Trail Center. The trail club has moved around for many years and now they are looking to settle into one central location now. Will said the club brings in trail crews every year to work doing maintenance on the Appalachian trail. The crews go out to the trail for a week at a time then will come back to the trail center for a rest break. This new facility would allow a nice place for them to take the break. There will also be a work area at the center to allow them to store materials as well and build items that they need for the trail. The Appalachian Trail Club has obtained a long-term lease with Somerset Woods Trustees to use this land on the

Malbons Mills Rd. The leased area is approximately 55 acres as well as an easement for the access road. The project site is only approximately 4.5 acres. Mr. Haskell also described the buildings that will be built at the trail center. This site will also have public sewer and water. The use of the trail facility will be seasonal during the spring, summer and fall. They will not be using it or housing people there in the winter. He said that there are a couple of wetlands in this area that have been delineated. One of them will not be impacted by this project at all and the other very small one will be impacted slightly by the access road going into the facility.

Will said that they are not requesting any waivers for this project.

Steve St. Pierre asked about the times of construction. Mr. Haskell said they are still working out the details right now. They are looking at working with the local National Guard and their IRT program to help with a lot of the site work. They are also still working on the architectural pieces of the buildings as well therefore they don't have an exact timeframe of when construction will begin. They hope to start some of the site work this spring and summer.

Steve St. Pierre asked if there are any future plans for shop, stores or restaurants on the site. Mr. Haskell said no. This facility will just be for the trail crews to utilize while they are here working on the trail. He said they will be doing some training classes up there for trail maintenance that may bring other people into the facility at times.

Harvey reminded them that once a site plan is approved, they will have one year from that date of approval to have a good start on the project. Otherwise, they would have to come back and go through this process all over again. Mr. Haskell said he understands that.

Jason Gayne said that as someone that lives in the area, he suggested that they be careful of their construction times. He said this is a residential area with a lot of small children and doesn't want them to have any issues with the neighbors if they are starting construction too early in the mornings or too late at night if possible. Mr. Haskell said he understands and is hoping that since they have a 950' access road into the site and at least a 500' buffers of trees around the site that most people won't be able to hear much noise from the construction.

Steve St. Pierre asked Mr. Kenway why they chose to center their operation in Skowhegan. Mr. Kenway said they had been operating out of the Dover Foxcroft/Monson area since 1991. He said the section of the trail that they maintain is around 267 miles and goes from Grafton Notch to Katahdin. He said that they wanted to be more central to where they were doing their work. Mr. Kenway said that over the past 2 years they looked at approximately 22 different properties. This property was the best one they could find. He also said that since Somerset Woods agreed to lease this property this worked out better for them. Being close to the 201 corridors also makes this a good location. They wanted to have close access to shopping centers as well as transportation options for the crews arriving to the site.

Harvey Austin asked if they are looking to build a hiking trail connecting Skowhegan to the Appalachian Trail. Mr. Kenway said that is not their plan.

Jeff McCabe said it is nice to see that they are going to be moving forward with this facility finally and as a former abutter to this property he feels that most people won't even know that it is there once is completed based on the location.

Mark Demo said that he owns the property that overlooks the Eddy and it abuts this project area to the South. He said that he has a question about snowmobiles using that property. He said there is a neighbor across the street from the Somerset Woods land and he goes in there to ride his snowmobile. Now there is a no snowmobile sign that has been placed there and he wants to know if that is because of this project. Mr. Kenway explained that the sign was placed there Somerset Woods and not by them. They would have to talk to Somerset Woods about snowmobiling on that property since they are only leasing it from them. Harvey said it looks like Somerset Woods is putting up the no snowmobiling signs on all of their properties. Mr. Demo said that if possible then people would still like to have access to the land for snowmobiling. Steve St. Pierre said they will probably need to talk to Somerset Woods about that.

Joel reminded everyone that they are only here to discuss the proposed project and not the other uses of this property.

Mr. Kenway also explained that they have no plans to be on the property in the winter time and they are not the landowners. They are only leasing it. So, any restrictions being placed on the use of the land would be coming from Somerset Woods.

Jeff McCabe said that he has recreated on that property in the past and he did notice the new sign now. He said this project will be a disruption to how the land might have been used in the past but he said it is a lot of land in there and they should be able to find a way to still use it for recreation.

Mr. Demo also said they should be concerned if they are planning on leaving equipment up there in the winter time and other times when nobody will be at the site. With the trails that go through there that could be a security issue with them. Mr. Kenway said that the site will be secure and will be monitored by a security company when they are not there.

Joel reminded everyone that this review is just for the Site Analysis and now the developer is all set to move forward with submitting a formal application. Once that is done, they will also have a Staff Review Committee meeting and a public hearing.

4) ITEMS BY THE PUBLIC:

None

5) COMMUNICATIONS:

Steve St. Pierre said that an email had come in from an abutter of the Appalachian Trail Club project with a bunch of questions. He has been able to get answers to these questions from the Site Analysis discussion and will make sure she gets those.

6) NEW BUSINESS:

A) Discussion and decision on a Flood Hazard Permit application submitted by Madison CSG LLC for the property located at 414 Madison Avenue (Map 4, Lot 12-1)

Dan Diffin from Sevee & Maher Engineers was present to talk about these applications. He explained that the Flood Hazard and Shoreland permits for this project were in fact approved last year however they have since expired. Therefore, they are coming back to get them approved again. Once approved they are planning on starting some work in March. This project is for a solar array that will be located in Madison however, the

access roadway crosses into Skowhegan for a short distance. He also said that nothing has changed in the application since the last time it was approved.

Motion by Jeff McCabe to approve the Flood Hazard Permit application submitted by Madison CSG LLC for the property located at 414 Madison Avenue (Map 4, Lot 12-1). Seconded by Derek Chretien. Motion passed 3-0-1 (Harvey Austin abstained)

B) Discussion and decision on a Shoreland Zoning Permit application submitted by Madison CSG LLC for the property located at 414 Madison Avenue (Map 4, Lot 12-1).

Mr. Diffin said that this Shoreland permit is the same as the one that was approved last year.

Motion by Jeff McCabe to approve the Shoreland Zoning Permit application submitted by Madison CSG LLC for the property located at 414 Madison Avenue (Map 4, Lot 12-1). Seconded by Derek Chretien. Motion passed 3-0-1 (Harvey Austin abstained)

7) UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

8) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE:

9) ITEMS BY:

• **SELECTMEN:**

• **DEPARTMENT HEADS:**

(Harvey Austin removed himself from the board and sat in the audience for this discussion)

Bryan informed them that he is currently dealing with a situation regarding a private campground off of the Canaan Road. This private campground was approved in 2009 and now he has received a Shoreland Zoning permit application to expand this campground. It was brought to his attention that this property is currently in violation of the Shoreland Ordinance because they have in fact installed 2 new concrete pads to place campers on and extended the originally permitted driveway. He said that there are 3 owners of the property and 2 of the owners have submitted the Shoreland zoning permit application for an after-the-fact permit. One owner is opposed to this expansion of campsites. Bryan asked since there is a civil issue between the owners, how would the Planning Board like him to proceed.

Harvey said he wanted to add some other details for them. He said he remembers when he, Fred Marshall and Rick Turner put in this campground for them to use. They had all spoken with Randy Gray back then and Randy had told them that if other campers wanted to and visit then they would have to dry camp and not hook into the sewer system there. Harvey said then the Turner's and the Marshall's actually built 3 more campsites in the

park which are permanent sites. Harvey said he has told them that it wasn't right what they have done and now that those sites are there, there isn't any parking spaces. He said he has an appointment to speak with a surveyor about this property. He said he just wanted to enlighten the Planning Board before it goes on much further. Bryan also told the other parties that filed the permit application that he would want to see a survey as well before he could make any decisions.

Bryan said he has checked with MMA and they told him that as long as someone can show right, title and interest in a party then they can in fact submit an application for review and he would have to review it. He said even if there is a civil situation it would not stop them from reviewing a permit application.

Jeff McCabe said he appreciated Harvey removing himself from the Board for this discussion and he also said that where it is in fact one of the Planning Board members involved in this matter then they might want to just have a discussion with the town attorney to see how to proceed.

Bryan also talked about the Freedom of Access training link that he had sent out to everyone last week. There is a training online for them to review. Once they do that then they can sign the acknowledgement sheet that they have reviewed and understand the Freedom of Access rules.

- **MEMBERS:**
Harvey mentioned the banner signs that hang above the crosswalk in the downtown. He said that is not a very safe situation and someone is going to get run over in that crosswalk because a driver is trying to read those signs. Harvey also said if the event has gone by then the sign talking about it needs to be removed. Jason Gayne said the Chamber had one up there for Jingle-fest which was a while ago. He said they can't take it down until the Highway Department rents a lift and takes them down.
- **CHAIRMAN:**
- **STAFF:**

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Harvey Austin to adjourn at 8:08 p.m., Seconded by Derek Chretien.
Motion passed 4-0.

Minutes approved on January 18, 2022.

Chairman _____	_____