

**TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

August 17, 2021

6:00 P.M.

Council Room, Municipal Building

PRESENT:

Steve Conley, Chairman
Steve St. Pierre, Vice Chairman
Stephen Gould, Secretary
Harvey Austin (left at 6:36 pm)
Jeff McCabe
Matt Smith
Derek Chretien
Joel Greenwood, Planner
Cynthia Kirk, Recording Secretary

ABSENT:

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Uriah Forest-Bulley, Kleinschmidt Associates
Todd Smith (arrived at 6:25 pm)

• **QUORUM:**

Planning Board Meeting called to order at 6:00 P.M. Quorum was present.

2) MINUTES OF THE August 3, 2021 PLANNING BOARD MEETING TO BE APPROVED:

Motion by Stephen Gould to approve the August 3, 2021 Planning Board meeting minutes, as written. Seconded by Derek Chretien. Motion passed 4-0. (Harvey Austin & Jeff McCabe abstained)

3) SITE PLAN / SUBDIVISION:

None

4) ITEMS BY THE PUBLIC:

None

5) COMMUNICATIONS:

None

6) **NEW BUSINESS:**

A) Discussion and decision on the Shoreland Zoning Application submitted by Kleinschmidt Associates on behalf of Brookfield White Pine Hydro, LLC for the property located on Mill Street (Assessor's Map 26, Lot 1).

Uriah Forest- Bulley from Kleinschmidt Associates gave a brief presentation on the project. He said they are proposing to install an upstream fish lift on the Weston Dam here in Skowhegan. This will help facilitate the migration of fish such as salmon upstream along the Kennebec River. The plan is to start construction next year in June and won't be completed until 2025. It is quite a process to build this and it will start with having to build a coffer dam on the side of the dam and around the entire project. There will also have to be a staging area/ road that will extend into the river for the construction. Uriah said there will also be some bedrock removal to allow the fish lift to sit down in the river.

Steve Conley asked if there has been any discussion on how this project will impact the future Run of the River project. Bryan Belliveau said that he knows that Kristina Cannon from Main Street has been working with Brookfield regarding this project and it shouldn't have any impact on the Run of River project. Uriah said that the fish lift shouldn't have any impact on the flow of the river.

Harvey Austin asked if there is a fish lift at the Shawmut Dam. Uriah said they are simultaneously working on getting one approved for that dam as well. He said the Federal goal is to get the Atlantic Salmon back up to the historic Sandy River spawning ground.

Derek Chretien asked what this will do to the other fish species in the river. Uriah said he doesn't believe it will have a great impact on the other species and it will help create diversity in the river again.

Stephen Gould asked if they are going to have to install a fish lift in the other channel as well. Uriah said no. The goal is to just attract the fish up into the one channel. Stephen asked if the coffer dam will stay up during the entire project. Uriah said it his understanding that it will be.

Joel asked if it is the same design as the fish lift in Winslow. Uriah said it is very similar to that design where it is a large bucket that will be raised up to lift the fish past the dam. Derek asked if there will be measures in place to make sure the outflow pipe where the fish will come out upstream doesn't clog. Uriah said he isn't sure on that yet. He said there are plans to create an operations and maintenance plan for the fish lift so that should be addressed in that.

Jeff McCabe asked if this project will impede the stairs at all. Uriah said no. Jeff also asked if this fish lift will be completely fenced in and not allow people to watch it working. Uriah said he believes it will be. He said the fish lift itself will be out in the river so there won't any fencing around that part.

Steve Conley asked what the cost of the project is. Jeff said in the application it said \$11,000,000.00.

Motion by Harvey Austin to approve the Shoreland Zoning permit for Brookfield White Pines Hydro, LLC for the construction of the fish lift at the Weston Dam. Seconded by Jeff McCabe. Motion passed 6-0.

B) Discussion and decision on the Flood Hazard Application submitted by Kleinschmidt Associates on behalf of Brookfield White Pine Hydro, LLC for the property located on Mill Street (Assessor's Map 26, Lot 1).

Bryan suggested requesting a copy of the emergency action plan from the contractor to make sure they are prepared to handle any high-water events that might occur. Uriah said he will get them a copy of it once it's completed.

Stephen Gould asked what other permits they are applying for for this project. Uriah said that they are applying for a DEP permit and an Army Corp. permit. They have already submitted everything.

Joel reminded them that the Shoreland and Flood Hazard are good for one year only.

Motion by Harvey Austin to approve the Flood Hazard permit for Brookfield White Pines Hydro, LLC for the construction of the fish lift at the Weston Dam. Seconded by Stephen Gould. Motion passed 6-0.

7) UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

8) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE:

A) Housing Section

Joel said he has provided them with the first draft of the housing section of the Comprehensive Plan. He said he would like them to take time and review it and see if anything needs to be updated or changed. He said that they have received the new 2020 Census information now. He said the population of Skowhegan came back as 8,620 which is an increase of 31 people. As far as the housing profile he looked at how many housing units there are versus how many are needed in Skowhegan. Joel reviewed the summary page and data he has collected so far such as average rental costs and availability. Harvey said any units he has listed he gets bombarded with calls and the last ones he rented where people from Waterville. Bryan said that the prices in Waterville have probably increased because of all of the development down there.

Joel asked Bryan if there are a lot of older housing units in town that are having problems with physical conditions. Bryan said probably more than half of them need updating and repairs.

Steve Conley asked where is shows in the plan the drastic need for rental units. Joel said on page 10. Steve also asked if there is a need for housing that isn't rental housing. Joel said on page 8 it talks about the affordability of purchasing houses in Skowhegan and it shows the average purchase price of \$130,000.

There was discussion about areas in town available for development of nice housing such as the Dillon property on the Middle Road and the Industrial parks for Commercial properties. Jeff McCabe mentioned a few things they might want to add in this section of the plan such as short-term rentals, Air B&B's and the Homeless Shelter.

Steve St. Pierre said they might want to also look at adding the need for hotel/motel accommodations. He said that Skowhegan holds all of these great events in town but we don't have to places available for people to stay here in town so they go back to Waterville or Augusta to stay. Steve said maybe they could offer something to our existing motels to expand and if they don't want to then offer it to someone else to build new ones. Joel also

mentioned the upper levels of the downtown area being available for short-term rentals as well as the Bigelow Brewing building on the island. Bryan said they might want to be careful pushing the Air B&B's unless they are owner occupied because of the issues that can arise from buildings not being taken care of.

Steve Conley said they will take some time to review the rest of this section and discuss it at the next meeting.

9) ITEMS BY:

- **SELECTMEN:**

Todd Smith reminded everyone about the Special Town Meeting being held on August 24, 2021 @ 7:00 pm in the council room and encouraged everyone to attend. He also said the Special Election will be held on August 31st for the vacant Selectmen's seat and hopes everyone gets out and votes. Todd also thanked the Planning Board for their work on the Comprehensive Plan right now and enjoys hearing everyone's ideas for the future of Skowhegan.

- **DEPARTMENT HEADS:**

None

- **MEMBERS:**

Stephen Gould asked if the parking issue with the Charter School has been resolved yet. Bryan said it has not. He said they submitted a plan that he doesn't feel is adequate and it doesn't meet the conditions of their Site Plan approval. Joel agreed. Stephen Gould said we have reviewed this several times and need to figure out what is going on with it and somehow make them adhere to their conditions of approval. Bryan said he hasn't used that parking lot since he has come here, but he knows that it is just the Charter School that is putting a strain on it. There are several downtown businesses that utilize it in ways they shouldn't be.

Steve Conley asked if they can get the language of the conditions of approval and see what needs to be done. Cindy will send it to them. Steve also asked what Bryan needs from them to be able to enforce this. Bryan said they can just give him a recommendation of what they want done and he will enforce it. Joel said he will send them the correspondence he has had with the Charter School as well.

- **CHAIRMAN:**

- **STAFF:**

