

**FRANKLIN PLANNING BOARD  
PUBLIC MEETING  
October 28, 2020  
6:00 p.m.**

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and Executive Orders from the Governor, this meeting of the Franklin Planning Board met virtually via the Zoom link below:*

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87406079961>

**Minutes**

**Call to Order:**

- ☐ Reading of the Virtual Meeting Authorization by Planning Director Richard Lewis
- ☐ Roll Call – Present: Mayor Anthony Giunta (Florida-home alone), Library Director Robert Sargent (Library alone), Councilor Jo Brown (home alone), Christine Dzujna (home with husband Councilor George Dzujna), Chairman David Liberatore (home alone), Tim Flaherty (home alone), Kathy Lauer-Rago (home alone), Ted Starkweather (home alone), James DeBernardo (home alone) and Donna Tully (home alone). Member David Testerman joined the meeting at 7:05pm.
- ☐ Pledge of Allegiance
- ☐ Approval of September 23, 2020 Planning Board Minutes – A motion to approve was made by Member Dzujna and seconded by Councilor Brown. There were no corrections noted. By roll call vote, the motion carried with **6-0-2** (Mayor Giunta and Library Director Rob Sargent abstained since they were not present for the September 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting).

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:**

P 20-06: LinCross, LLC applicant and Investors Property One, LLC owners, are seeking Site Plan Review to establish a sub/sandwich shop at 31 North Main Street, Map/Lot 098-085-00 in the B-1 [Low Density Business & Commercial] zoning district.

A motion to accept the application as complete was made by Councilor Starkweather and seconded by Member Dzujna. The motion carried by a **6-0-1** with Mayor Giunta recusing himself.

The applicant Chris Norcross explained how his company hoped to open up a take-out sub shop at 31 North Main Street. He told the board that they had a full restaurant at 16 Pleasant Street in Bristol, but that this would just be take-out only. When asked about parking, Mr. Norcross said that there was a public parking lot right next door and there was also some street parking. He didn't see parking as an issue, since customers would be stopping only long enough to make a pick-up. Member Dzujna asked about hours of operation and Mr. Norcross stated they would be open Tuesday through Friday from 11am

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to 7pm and on Saturday from noon to 4pm. Planner Lewis asked if they had made any changes in the layout of the building since they submitted the application. Mr. Norcross stated that everything was the same. When asked about an opening date, Mr. Norcross answered that they hoped to open in mid-November. A question about signage came up and Mr. Norcross said they would only be putting signs in the windows.

There was no public comment and no further questions from the Board. Member Flaherty made a motion to approve the application which was seconded by Councilor Starkweather. The motion carried by roll call vote of **6-0-1** with Mayor Giunta's recusal.

P 20-07: Stevens Mill, LLC [Chinburg Properties] is seeking Site Plan Review and a Special Use Permit to convert the existing mill buildings into 140 residential units & approximately 35,000 sq. ft. of commercial space. The project involves 4 Lots on Tax Map 117; 261-00 [81 Memorial St., Franklin Business & Industrial Corp]; 154-00 [Canal St., City of Franklin] and 153-00 and 365-00 [20 Canal St., Stevens Mill LLC]. The Lots are located in the B-2 [High Density Business & Commercial] zoning district.

Chairman Liberatore thanked the applicant for their interest in Franklin's redevelopment. Council Brown motioned to accept the application as complete. Member Dzujna seconded that motion. The motion carried by a roll call vote of **7-0-0**.

Mr. Eric Chinburg told the Board that he and his team were happy to be here after three years of effort. They had acquired the property in December of 2017 and they appreciate the efforts of the city to get them to this point. It has been a difficult project to assemble the necessary components of financing which utilizes lenders, equity investors, and the city itself through its TIF. Without all of these things it wouldn't happen. Chinburg properties has been restoring historic mills for 25 years, and have completed 16 over the years. The Chinburg company develops, designs, builds, and manages them, and retains ownership. They try to create quality living environments in all of their communities. They create spaces for people to live and work in. They currently have properties in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts.

Mr. Chinburg then introduced Matt Assia who presented a summary of the project. He outlined that the project will have 140 apartments, a mix of studio, one- & two-bedroom apartments. The two buildings closest to Central Street will be reserved for commercial uses. The current business center is reasonably well occupied and many of those tenants will be staying with the project. One tool that enables this project to move forward is the Historic Tax Credit program, which comes with the obligation and requirement to conform to the National Park Services historic preservation standards. As such the building exterior and interior will be restored very diligently and professionally.

Mr. Assia turned the presentation over to Brian Jones to discuss the site plans. Mr. Jones is a registered PE and his firm provided the civil engineering for the project. The two lots fronting on Memorial Street are currently owned by the City of Franklin and the Franklin Business and Industrial Development Corp. and will be acquired by Chinburg as part of the development. There is a building on the FBIDC lot that will be taken down and both lots will be used to create parking. The property has access to water, sewer and natural gas. All the storm water from the property flows to the river. Plan sheet C-101 shows how the site will be prepared and the location of the area to be demolished. By removing some building area between Building C and D, they will create a court yard that can be used by their tenants. They will create a central patio area to the left of the main Franklin Business Center entrance that will serve to connect the separate buildings and create a focal point for the site. The screened trash enclosure is located at the

northwest corner of the site and will accommodate dumpsters and totes. All the drive aisles are two way with the exception of the drop off at the corner of Smith and Canal Streets.

Mr. Jones continued that Sheet C-103 is the grading and drainage plan. This redevelopment of the site would remove approximately 38,000 square feet of pavement and buildings. This will decrease in volume and rate of runoff from the site. Stormwater will be collected in catch basins and then routed through new water quality units. Sheet C-104 is the utilities plan. New connections to the sewer and water lines will be created. The landscape plans include native and adaptive plantings to soften the parking areas and enhance the building. The patio area will include accessible walkways and create a pleasant outdoor space. The site lighting plan is on sheet E-101. The lighting levels are in the 1 to 1.5 candles for a more residential look. There is also some bollard lighting in the parking areas and common areas.

Member Flaherty praised them on the presentation and mentioned that parking might be the only concern. This comment was echoed by Chairman Liberatore. Planner Lewis asked if the catch basins have sumps in them and Mr. Jones answered that they did. The Planner then asked if they had a cleaning and maintenance plan in place for the catch basins. Mr. Jones said that they do. The Planner asked if they could include a site maintenance plan for both the catch basins and the landscaping. Mr. Jones said the landscaping plan is tailored toward stormwater management with consideration of fertilizer use and irrigation. Mr. Assia said that as the owners of the property they take a lot of pride in their grounds and want their residents to have a great home. It will be well maintained. Member Flaherty asked when they would start the project. Mr. Assia said that they hope to start this winter and by the summer of 2022 they would be welcoming in residents to the property. Eighteen months of construction.

Councilor Brown asked about the concern of parking for the Opera House. Where would the 22 leased parking spots in the municipal lot be located? Mr. Assia said that it would be somewhere in that lot, but that they don't know where exactly at this time. Planner Lewis said that the City is committed to creating a parking lot next to the municipal lot. He thought that 18-26 new spaces could be created. Member Tully asked for a recap of the parking lots the City will be adding and whether they will be available for overnight parking. Planner Lewis said that the 18 spaces that will be created on the south side of Central near the mini mart have been committed to the IFA residents across the street. The parking lot on Church Street might have about 26 spots and will be public parking. When the current and future projects for repurposing within the city come to fruition, the City will need to address parking and making some determination as to where overnight parking will be best.

Mr. Assia stepped through the points that the Planner raised in the memo to the Board. Since the property resides in the Downtown Redevelopment District, the creation of 140 apartments triggers a Special Permit for a multi-family use and there are also some commercial uses in the future that might trigger a Special Use Permit. The existing offices are covered by the Site Plan approval and don't need a Special Use Permit. The second aspect is the Performance Standards in the district. The redevelopment is consistent with the goals of the downtown redevelopment of the downtown area. Related to section H of the DRD, is how they comply with the setbacks. Because of the age and location of the property this project will need to go through the Heritage Commission. Their approval is a pre-condition to the building permit. They expect to make a presentation in December to the Heritage Commission. Lastly, a condition that the dumpsters be screened, which will be done with a cedar privacy fence. The next topic is section I in the DRD which is residential density. The Planning Board has the ability to grant approval for less than the 720 sq. feet. Most of the project's residential units will be less than 720 sq. feet and they have satisfied the parking as required.

Library Director Rob Sargent asked if they have considered how to differentiate the parking between the CATCH building residents and the Stevens Mill residents. Mr. Assia said they will have an onsite property manager and that they manage their lots with parking tags and cameras to monitor the activity in the lots. The 140 apartments using the City's requirement of 1.33 spaces per unit, results in a parking supply requirement of 186 spaces. The parking plan on the campus provides for 164 spaces. The applicant is seeking to lease 22 spaces from the City for overnight parking. Rob Sargent asked if the units were rentals or condominiums. Mr. Assia said they were market rate rentals.

The other requirement of Section I of the DRD is a certain amount of commercial space and Mr. Assia said they have met that requirement. He also feels that the landscaping and lighting meets the requirements. As for signage, they will come back to the city at a later date. Speaking to the requirement for commercial parking which is 1 space for every 350 sq. ft which results in 102 spaces. The Planner's memo addressed which spaces on the campus and in the municipal lots meet that requirement. Mr. Assia said that typically they have been able to manage the spaces between the commercial and residential tenants. Planner Lewis added that within the 350 sq. feet requirement there is some percentage of commercial space that is storage, hallways, bathrooms, et cetera. The Planner pointed out that that Plan sheet C-102 contained a parking table that incorrectly counted parking spaces that were privately owned. This table will need to be revised and re-calculated.

Planner Lewis mentioned the issue of snow management and Mr. Assia said they would contract with a snow removal company to haul the snow from the site. He asked if the O & M plan addressed snow management and Mr. Assia said that it would. The Planner said that the plan was exceptionally well done. He then asked if Mr. Assia could get the revised parking table prepared so it can be included in the packets to the Board Members for the Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The meeting was opened to the public. Ms. Desiree McLaughlin and her parents the Dominguez were there listening to the meeting. Ms. McLaughlin said that this was an exceptional site plan and they are excited to see the site developed. Their biggest concern is the parking for her seven apartments and the laundromat. She said the night and day parking doesn't work for them since the laundromat is open 24 hours. An issue that still concerns her is the right-of-way behind the Greemar, LLC property on Central Street. Mr. Assia referred to sheet LA-1.2 showing the arborvitae and viburnum at the back of the parking in lieu of the fence. He added that there is no intention to do anything with this bump out section, that they would be honoring the existing parking area. Ms. McLaughlin asked if there would be any delineation between the parking behind the laundromat and the Stevens Mill parking. Mr. Assia said that there is a curb between the two lots. She then asked about the runoff and Mr. Jones said that they would both remove pavement and would be installing a curb so that none of the runoff from the Chinburg site would flow onto the laundromat site. Lastly, Ms. McLaughlin asked about the actual building process and how it would impact the neighbors. Mr. Assia said they are very mindful of the abutters and that if there is ever an issue, it could be addressed to him or other members of the Chinburg team.

George Dzujna, City Council Ward 1, said he and his wife have been anxiously waiting for this transformation and that they are very excited about the project.

Leigh Webb, Ward 3, prefaced his remarks by thanking Mr. Chinburg for bringing this project to Franklin, however he had a concern about parking. Is there any provision now, that can allay fears that there won't be a parking problem in the future? Chairman Liberatore said that this is a constant conversation and Planner Lewis added that there is also ongoing discussion regarding the Stanley Mill property. The goal is to get that cleaned up and perhaps create not only some green space with access to the river and the trail

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that goes around Odell Park, but additional parking. There are options on the table and the Planner thinks there will be continued discussions about this.

Planner Lewis said that because Chinburg will be supplying some revised information about parking, the discussion will need to go back before the public for any questions. He anticipates having a Motion for Approval at the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mr. Chinburg thanked the Board and public for the interest they've given to their presentation and Mayor Giunta again thanked Eric Chinburg and his team.

Councilor Brown made a motion to continue the meeting to the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. The motion was seconded by Member Dzujna. **The motion carried by roll call vote 8-0-0. [Mayor Giunta, Rob Sargent, Jo Brown, Christine Dzujna, Chairman Liberatore, Tim Flaherty, Kathy Lauer-Rago and David Testerman all voting in favor.]**

**Public Comment and Other Business:** None

**Planner's Update:** Planner Lewis mentioned receipt of an application for a subdivision of the Stanley Weglarz property that runs between Salisbury Road and the end of Industrial Park Drive. The intent is to create a 2+ acre parcel fronting on Salisbury Road for residential use with the residual 21 remaining for commercial use. The other thing he wished to mention is that he, the City Manager, Jim Aberg [FBIDC], Niel Cannon [The City's Economic Development consultant] and Marty Parichand [White Water Park] and occasionally Todd Workman [PermaCityLife] meet and discuss various items. At this morning's meeting it was decided that the City put together an application to the State for a Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant that will assist in developing some features in the White Water Park and create stadium seating in the Trestle View Park. The Mill City Park has already received some Federal Land and Water Conservation funding for the land-based portion of the White-Water Park. In the springtime some construction will be starting on this land-based aspect. If successful with this newest grant there may be some construction in the river sometime in 2021. Cumberland Farms is an ongoing topic of discussion. We hope to finalizing some agreements with them sometime in late winter or early spring. As for Toad Hall, the top two floors have been purchased for residential use. As for the restaurant, there was some interest from Ciao Pasta to move in there since the Northfield Restaurant burnt down.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:40pm by a unanimous roll call vote.

- The next Planning Board regular meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. and the application dead line date is October 28, 2020.

Minutes recorded by Cheryl Y. Fisher, Administrative Assistant Planning & Zoning.