

# MINUTES

## PLANNING BOARD

**FEBRUARY 13, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.**

*115 Pleasant Street, Gardner, MA  
Room 203, Robert L. Hubbard Conference Room*

**Members present:** Allen L. Gross/*Chairman*, Robert J. Bettez, Sr. /*Vice-Chairman*, Robert Swartz, and Laura Casker /*Members*, and Trevor Beauregard/*Director-City Planner*.

**Members absent:** Mark Schafron.

**Also present:** Chris Coughlin-City Engineer, Christine Fucile-DCDP, and Andrew Mansfield of The Gardner News.

ANNOUNCEMENT - Any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the Chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such recording shall notify the Chair forthwith. All Documents referenced or used during the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to the Director of Community Development & Planning pursuant to the Open Meeting and Public Records Law. All documents shall become part of the official record of the meeting.

***Mr. Gross called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.***

### **1. MINUTES:**

#### **Vote to approve Minutes:**

- ✓ *Public meeting of November 14, 2017 ~ GFA Federal Credit Union*
- ✓ *Regular meeting of November 14, 2017*

***Motion to accept and approve Planning Board Public and Regular minutes as presented.***

**R. Bettez/R. Swartz.**

**Vote-All in favor**

### **2. OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **2.1 Zoning Re-Codification**

T. Beauregard informed a second meeting was held with the zoning working group and the zoning Consultant. Expecting to have a final draft done by the end of this month, or the beginning of next month for public intake. Furthermore, should start the process for a joint public hearing with the City Council and Planning Board which will most likely be March or April.

Mr. Gross inquired if there is a need to have a public meeting first to get input, and T. Beauregard replied not sure at this time.

T. Beauregard indicated the joint public hearing notice should be published before April<sup>1st</sup> in order to set the zoning in place. In addition, the recreational marijuana licensing starts on April 1<sup>st</sup>, therefore would like to get the new proposed zoning ready in place prior to this happening.

## **2.2 Derby Drive**

T. Beauregard recapped this has been closed for the winter since mid-to late December, and expect the contractor start up again in April to begin finalizing multi-use trail, paving, lighting and landscaping.

## **3. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **3.1 Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar – General Discussion**

T. Beauregard stated he wanted to keep the Planning Board up to date since numerous calls have been received in the past year for potential large scale solar developments.

T. Beauregard reminded there are currently two overlay districts, one on West Street and one at Summit Industrial Park. The West Street overlay has been permitted for over 16 megawatts of large scale solar developments, with no more available land.

T. Beauregard stated most of the calls pertain to developing new large scale solar projects. The two options obtainable, are one to proceed with a use variance, and the other to request a new overlay. The process of establishing a new overlay starts with making a request through the City Council, which then refers to the Planning Board for a recommendation back to the City Council. At this time, the City Council has not received any requests, but imagine they will sometime in the near future. T. Beauregard noted the Planning Board possibly will receive a request at some point in time, and the Planning Board will have to consider whether to recommend additional overlays in the City at this time or not.

T. Beauregard explained that currently the City has three large scale solar developments completed in the City, and another three projects have been approved in the existing overlays.

Mr. Gross said this will likely be a topic of discussion in the near future, and added that most of the land has been used up in the allowed zones to date, so the Planning Board will have to give some thought as to whether or not to create any more overlays now, or wait and see what will happen with the ones that have already been created.

### **3.2 Downtown Planning**

T. Beauregard explained that the City, along with Block Grant funding have hired Tighe & Bond Engineers to prepare an inventory and assessment of the downtown infrastructure including sidewalks, handicap ramps, crosswalks, and lighting.

The assessment involved sending out a drone during daytime, and nighttime to illustrate a layout of the land, including the lighting, and darker spots at night time.

T. Beauregard further explained that as a result of this study, will be able to move forward with the first phase of the improvements, including replacement of sidewalks where needed, putting in new crosswalks, and providing additional Victorian lighting which will include raising the lights onto cement pedestals to protect the poles.

T. Beauregard noted the plan for downtown has been split into sections for various phases. The first phase will be completed next year using block grant funds, and over the next five years will set aside funding within the block grant program to complete all the phases.

### **3.3 Orpheum Park and Parking Lot**

T. Beauregard stated there are funds to design and construct the park and parking lot at the former theater location. The design will begin this month, and construction should be completed this year or early next.

### **3.4 Liabilities to Assets Program**

T. Beauregard explained this is a new program proposed by the State which addresses abandoned and vacant housing in North Central Massachusetts area, and has approved a budget of 2.5 million dollars.

The City of Gardner has over 100 properties in this category which also includes industrial and commercial properties that are vacant and abandoned.

The objective is to target properties that have been vacant and abandoned long term, for three or more years, making an effort to keep the target area in a half mile radius to focus on certain neighborhoods, concentrating on the downtown area

NewVue Communities, which used to be the Twin Cities CDC, will be managing this project because they are a regional entity. NewVue will create a 121A corporation,

including a board of directors with representation from each of the communities to put together the plan. The plan will identify all of the properties that will be targeted within the City, which could be up to 40 properties from each community. The total number of properties will change since some may be purchased. The plan will need to be approved by the Planning Board and City Council, and once approved will start to implement it.

Mr. Gross asked if the representation from the City will have a sub-committee, or will it be handled by the staff. T. Beauregard said to date it has been handled by the staff, but may be up to each community how they want the process managed. T. Beauregard noted there will be only about four to six properties per year for each community, due to funding and timing.

Mr. Gross inquired if the City will be taking ownership of these properties, and T. Beauregard replied no, the 121A Corporation will be managing ownerships.

L. Casker expressed concern with regard to eminent domain as stated on the Liabilities to Assets pilot program. T. Beauregard stated the eminent domain process will primarily be to clear the title to the most extreme troubled properties.

T. Beauregard further explained that these properties will become available to income eligible people, and have to be at least 110% or less of the median average income in this region.

### **4. Announcements, News Articles, Events:**

... Next regular Planning Board meeting scheduled for March 13, 2018.

... Gardner News articles presented.

### **Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn.*

**R. Bettez/L. Casker.**

**Vote -All in favor.**

***The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.***

All documents referenced or used during the meeting are part of the official record and are available in the Department of Community Development and Planning pursuant to the Open Meeting and Public Records Law.
--