

The Planning and Zoning Commission of the Town of Avon held a virtual *GoToMeeting* on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. Present were Peter Mahoney, Chair, Dean Hamilton, Joseph Gentile, Mary Harrop, Robin Baran, Chet Bukowski, and Alternates Elaine Primeau (did not sit) and Thomas Armstrong (did not sit). Lisa Levin, Vice Chair, and Alternate Julie Rousey were absent. Also present was Hiram Peck, Director of Planning and Community Development.

Mr. Mahoney called the meeting to order at 7pm

INFORMAL DISCUSSION

Nod Brook Mall – 315 West Main Street – request for larger sign

Lee Zakaria, Nod Brook Investors, LLC (owner) indicated that construction of the Home Goods store as well as the façade renovations are well underway. He addressed signage noting that most of their other shopping centers have 35'-45' pilon signs with all the tenants listed, adding that he understands this is not something that the Town is looking to move towards. He noted that all of his tenants at 315 West Main Street have asked for more signage along West Main, including Fresh Market and HomeGoods. He displayed a photo of a detached sign (34.5 feet high) that is used in most of their shopping centers. He displayed a 51 SF detached sign created for the subject site (to potentially replace the existing 24 SF detached sign). The design elements of the sign are similar to the redevelopment features of the shopping center. He concluded by noting that he's happy to work with the Town on signage.

In response to Mr. Bukowski, Mr. Peck explained that amending the Regulations would be the proper way to allow larger detached signs (24 SF is currently the maximum permitted). He added that the entirety of the Zoning Regulations are currently in the process of being updated/revised. He added that the size/square footage of a shopping complex may play a part in the size/square footage of the allowed signage.

In response to Mr. Gentile, Mr. Zakaria indicated that two former tenants (C2 Education and Nestle) did have signs on the detached sign but noted that they were very small; the tenant signs on the new proposed sign would be larger.

In response to Mr. Mahoney, Mr. Peck indicated that he is expecting to get the outline very soon from the consultant such that he can share the information for the update to the Zoning Regulations at either the April or May meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion – Window Signage

Mr. Peck explained that he reviewed in detail sign regulations for several towns in the State. This was done in response to notes received from a local sign company (ArtFX) relative to window signage at the Good Feet store (discussed at the last meeting). He explained that there are options for window signage: 1) don't allow window signs at all; 2) allow 25% of the window coverage with signs with a specific maximum (e.g., 8 SF); or 3) allow 25% of the windows to be covered without any copy/wordage. He explained that towns tend to be fairly strict with regard to allowances for window signage. The police are not thrilled with window signage that blocks visibility for security purposes.

Mr. Mahoney noted his agreement on not allowing copy (e.g., sale flyers) but identification of the store in some way seems worth considering.

In response to Mr. Bukowski, Mr. Peck clarified that 25% of the window coverage could be permitted without any copy/wordage (e.g., a picture of someone skiing, trying on shoes, or eating cookies).

In response to Mr. Gentile and Ms. Baran, Mr. Peck explained/clarified that it would be 25% of the total window area (e.g., if there is 100 SF of window in front of a store, 25% of that would be allowed to be signage).

Ms. Baran asked if provisions/exceptions can be made for coverage for windows that display storage areas, such as the Good Feet store.

Lawrin Rosen, ArtFX, read aloud "Window Sign Proposed Regulations" dated 3-14-23.

8-24 Referral - 645 West Avon Road - Municipal purchase

Mr. Peck explained that the Town proposes to make this site part of the Town-owned Senior Center property, as it is in close proximity. A one-year leaseback to the current owner is proposed.

Mr. Mahoney noted his favor to buy the property but noted that it seems like a bad idea to take down the existing house.

In response to Mr. Gentile, Mr. Peck indicated that questions about the existing house and future use of the site would hopefully be answered at the Town Council's public hearing.

Mrs. Primeau, Towpath Lane, said we are losing history in Avon by tearing down all the old buildings. She said that the Town Manager's notice said that the house would be demolished but the garage kept for storage.

Mr. Gentile said that the Affordable Housing Plan makes note of repurposing old properties and renovating them for affordable housing units. The Town Manager's notice said they may keep the garage and will be cleaning up the site. It would be good to know what they have in mind.

Mrs. Harrop said that often times restoring old houses is very costly and therefore unaffordable.

Mr. Bukowski suggested that the Commission approve the referral but ask the Town to investigate possibilities for keeping the house for repurposing. Mr. Hamilton agreed.

Ms. Baran said that the population that uses the Senior Center is growing larger every year and they need more space and more bathrooms. We need to know the reason for the proposed demolition before we can really make recommendations.

Mr. Mahoney motioned to approve the 8-24 Referral for the Town's acquisition of 645 West Avon Road subject to the following recommendation – The Town shall investigate ways in which to keep the existing house and repurpose it.

The motion was seconded by Mrs. Harrop and received approval from Messrs. Mahoney, Hamilton, Bukowski, and Gentile and Mesdames Harrop and Baran.

8-24 Referral - CIP FY 2023-2024 – request approval

Mr. Peck reported that the Commission received a copy of the Plan and offered to answer any questions.

Tom Armstrong, Ayrshire Lane, offered his comments for the CIP FY 2023-2024 Plan, to be included in the Commission's resolution.

Mrs. Harrop motioned to approve the 8-24 Referral for the CIP FY 2023-2024, with the addition of comments provided by Mr. Armstrong. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gentile and received approval from Mesdames Harrop and Baran, and Messrs. Gentile, Mahoney, Hamilton, and Bukowski.

The Commission found the CIP FY 2023-2024 Program to be consistent with Avon's 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development.

STAFF UPDATES

Discussion – Modification to CR (Commercial Retail) Zone

Mr. Peck explained that both 182 and 186 West Main Street are located in the CR zone. The CR zone requires lots to contain at least 60K SF as well as a minimum building footprint of 4K SF. Neither 182 or 186 West Main contain 60K SF and the requirement for a 4K SF footprint makes it very difficult to redevelop these lots. There is someone currently interesting in this redevelopment. He noted that he would like to draft some very minor changes to the CR zone that would allow for commercial redevelopment of the aforementioned parcels. These changes would be heard at the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15pm

Linda Sadlon
Avon Planning and Community Development