

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
Minutes of June 22, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Bill Smith.

Roll Call: Present for the meeting were DRB members William Smith, Tim Donahue, Steve Davis, Larry Garland, and Joel DeLary. Also present was ZA & DRB Clerk Mitch Osiecki; Kristine Collins (applicant); and Chris & Alana Alger (applicants from tabled May hearing).

Approval of Minutes: Steve Davis moved to approve the minutes of May 25, 2023. Tim Donahue seconded. **Vote to approve: 5-0.**

Conditional Use for AKMC LLC

Kristine Collins explained proposal of her partnership, AKMC LLC, which plans to redevelop the property at 57 Freight Yard Way into a short-term rental property.

Kristine envisions a five-unit Air BNB facility that reflects the character of the Northfield downtown. One unit will be a 20' x 28' ADA-compliant efficiency apartment. The other four units will be approximately 16' X 24'.

The applicants hope to enrich the connection between Northfield and Norwich University.

Bill Smith noted that the DRB will need to discuss parking needs for the property (which will depend on the proposed occupancy of the building).

Bill raised the possibility that this project might be subject to Act 250 Review. Mitch responded with a brief discussion of Act 250, including that Northfield was until recently considered a "one-acre" town. Because Northfield has enacted zoning regulations that establish standards for review of land-use development in town, Northfield successfully petitioned the State for re-designation as a "10-acre" town. The consequence of this change is that this project will not be subject to Act 250 review.

On a related matter, Mitch did note that the Freight Yard Way area currently has private wastewater but public drinking water. Northfield is in the early stages of expanding the areas served by public wastewater. The Freight Yard Way area is one of the sites planned for the provision of public wastewater service. Mitch noted that his understanding is that as the town expands wastewater and drinking water service to a larger service area, landowners in those areas will be required to connect to those municipal services.

Kristine stated that the maximum occupancy will be four people per unit. Each unit will have two beds on the main floor and two twin beds in a loft.

Mitch and Tom Davis (Economic Development Director) have both had conversations with Kristine, advising her about state agencies with whom she will need to connect, particularly:

- Agency of Natural Resources/Department of Environmental Conservation (wastewater systems and potable water supply);
- Department of Public Service/Division of Fire Safety (electrical code, fire suppression systems, required exits, etc.)

Joel discussed some ADA requirements that will likely need to be addressed.

Larry stated that while he's not opposed to the project, he would feel more comfortable if the DRB had more specifics as to the site plan for the project.

Mitch responded that he instructed the applicant to submit an application requesting Conditional Use approval, but in retrospect agrees that a Site Plan review is also warranted.

Mitch will work with Kristine to work out a schedule for getting a Site Plan prepared for DRB review.

The DRB tabled the Conditional Use review pending submission of an application for a Site Plan review.

Sign Permit for Town of Northfield (Transfer Station)

Mitch advised that the Sign Permit application of which members received a copy in advance of the meeting is complete. Casella has taken over the management of the Transfer Station and the sign depicted in the sign application was erected to reflect this change.

For the sake of consistency in the application of zoning regulations, Mitch had Town Manager Jeff Schulz submit a sign permit application for the new sign.

Motion: Larry Garland moved to approve the application as presented, but added a condition that the town keep the shrubbery around the sign trimmed to keep the sign neat and readable; Joel DeLary seconded.

Vote to approve: 4-1-0 (Steve Davis opposed).

Other Business

At the May 25 meeting, the DRB tabled discussion of an application from Chris & Alana Alger seeking a waiver of setbacks to build an addition on an existing garage (applicants had a schedule conflict arise on short notice and were unable to attend).

Mitch subsequently spoke Chris and determined that the relief from setback standards needed is greater than what can be provided by a waiver. The setback standard in the Alger's zoning district is 10 feet from lot lines. The DRB can grant a waiver of setbacks up to 50% of the required setback, or five feet. The addition Chris wishes to add to his garage will be similar to the footprint of the original garage Chris replaced a couple of years ago, and would be only about three feet from the property line.

Mitch briefly discussed the difference between a waiver of setbacks and a variance from zoning standards. A waiver of setbacks has a lower burden on the applicant, but it allows less flexibility. As stated above, a waiver can only be granted for 50% of the required setback, or 5 feet from property lines.

Chris plans to apply for a variance from zoning requirements at the July meeting. Mitch will work with Chris to make sure his application is complete ready for review in July.

Next Meeting: July 27, 2023, at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment: Steve Davis moved to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.