

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD**  
**Minutes of March 23, 2023**

**7:00 pm at Brown Public Library Community Room**  
**(also available remotely via Town GoToMeeting Account)**

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

**Roll Call:** Present for the meeting were DRB members William Smith, Tim Donahue, Paul Brown, Steve Davis, and Larry Garland along with ZA & DRB Clerk Mitch Osiecki. Also present were: Blake Pierson (applicant -- Whole Child Learning, DBA Rainbow Gardens); Bonnie & Dennis Donahue (applicants); Nancy Hall (abutter); David Pierson (abutter); Kay Matherson (abutter); Cody & Taylor Morris (abutters); Jerrey Drown (resident); Rob Korow (resident); and Kevin Camisa (representing Jeremy Drown).

**Approval of Minutes:** Paul Brown moved to approve the minutes of February 23, 2023. Steve Davis seconded. **Vote to approve: 4-0-1 (Smith abstained).**

**Conditional Use for Whole Child Learning, DBA Rainbow Gardens**

Blake Pierson presented the application and discussed conceptual plans for the school/childcare facility. Plans are to oversee kids in two age groups (ages 2-3 and ages 3-6). They expect to enroll 20-30 kids in total. The facility will operate two classrooms on the first floor of the Gray Building.

Steve Davis asked Blake to explain what is meant by a Waldorf-type school. Blake responded that a Waldorf school is similar to a Montessori school and focuses on “whole child” child development and encourages engagement with the natural world.

Paul Brown asked about the schedule for the school year, whether traffic was likely to be a problem, and whether interaction with the existing school system has been considered. Blake responded that they will follow a calendar similar to that of the local schools. In addition to the typical morning drop-off time, some kids will be picked up around noon, others around 3:30 or 5:00.

Blake commented that the facility is excited to provide affordable, accessible child care. They are also adding good jobs to the community and hope to encourage educators to put down roots in town.

Blake noted that he had originally joined the board of the Gray Building Coalition hoping to help in efforts to renovate the space and find appropriate uses for the building. As the need for pre-k childcare became apparent, the desire to develop this facility emerged as a priority.

Larry Garland asked about class sizes and start of the school year. Blake responded that they currently have 9 or 10 kids signed up for each class, and anticipate a maximum of 30 kids. Classes will start in mid-September.

There were no additional questions from the DRB or members of the public.

**Motion:** Larry Garland moved approve the application as presented; Tim Donahue seconded.

**Vote to approve: 5-0-0.**

### **Subdivision for Bonnie & Dennis Donahue**

Bonnie and Dennis Donahue presented details of their proposed subdivision. The proposed lot is about 6.4 acres (original application specified approximately 8 acres, but surveyors have marked the parcel, which is slightly smaller than originally estimated).

Bonnie shared a sketch of the proposed lot, which was not available at the time the original application was submitted. A copy of this sketch will be filed with the subdivision permit.

Bonnie noted that the driveway serving the new lot will be off an existing driveway serving the property of Brian & Sharon Tisdale. Mitch noted that, because the proposed driveway is a spur off an existing driveway, and does not directly connect to a town road, a town driveway permit is probably not required. Mitch will confirm this with the Town road foreman.

The proposed subdivision meets the minimum lot size for this district, and has sufficient road frontage – even though, as noted, the driveway will not connect directly to a town road.

There were no additional questions from the DRB, or from any abutting property owner.

**Motion:** Paul Brown moved to approve the application as presented; Steve Davis seconded.

**Vote to approve: 4-0-1 (Donahue abstained).**

### **Site Plan for Bonnie & Dennis Donahue**

Bonnie Donahue presented details of a site plan proposal for a dwelling anticipated for construction on the proposed subdivision. DRB has been provided a sketch of the proposed subdivision, which includes the planned “building envelope,” which depicts the area of the subdivision suitable for construction of a dwelling, wastewater system, and well.

There were no additional questions from the DRB, or from any abutting property owner.

**Motion:** Steve Davis moved to approve the application as presented; Paul Brown seconded.

**Vote to approve: 4-0-1 (Donahue abstained).**

### **Other Business**

Kevin Camisa spoke to the DRB on background about an anticipated request to subdivide the parcel on the corner of North Main Street and Water Street (the former Barry Chouinard site). There are two buildings on the lot and Jeffrey Drown has a buyer interested in purchasing one of the buildings, hence the desire to subdivide that lot.

Rob Korrow (Gillespie Fuels) spoke about plans for the building. Rob had received approval for a new building at his Stony Brook Road location, but construction costs escalated dramatically during COVID.

Rob is now eyeing the Chouinard building at 141 North Main as an alternative site for the Stony Brook Road project. Rob explained that he hopes to use the building for office space, some storage and maintenance. No customers will use this location.

Rob anticipates perhaps 8-10 employees at this location. The Stony Brook Road location will continue to serve as a fuel transfer station. No vehicle storage is anticipated at the North Main Street location.

Paul Brown announced that his term is expiring and he has decided step down from the DRB. Mitch and the DRB members thanked Paul for his service.

**Next Meeting:** April 27, 2023 at 7:00 pm.

**Adjournment:** Paul Brown moved to adjourn; Steve Davis seconded. **Motion carried, 5-0-0.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.