

# **Town of Northfield, Vermont Development Review Board Minutes of February 25, 2021**

**ROLL CALL:** Board members William Smith, Timothy Donahue III, Paul Brown, and Colin Bright were present. Steve Davis was absent. Also present were DRB Clerk Mitch Osiecki along and applicants Ron Lyon (for Norwich University) and Patrick Meehan. Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** Members of the DRB introduced themselves. Clerk/ZA Osiecki did likewise, as did the members of the public who joined the meeting.

**MINUTES:** Motion by Bright to approve minutes of January 28; seconded by Donahue. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

**APPLICATION:** Patrick Meehan presented details of his application. The Meehans built a tiny home on their property a couple of years ago, and now wish to build a larger single-family dwelling on the property. They wish to have the existing tiny home designated as an accessory dwelling unit upon completion of the proposed new home.

Mitch explained that the ZA is only allowed to approve an accessory dwelling unit within an existing structure. Because the tiny home is a free-standing structure, approval authority rests with the DRB. The order of construction is somewhat unusual, but certainly not unheard of. Patrick Meehan affirmed that the existing dwelling conforms to current setback regulations. Septic also not an issue. DRB confirmed that the ZA will have approval authority of the proposed new dwelling.

Bright moved to approve application as presented; Donahue seconded. **Motion passed 4-0.**

**APPLICATION:** Ron Lyon presented an application on behalf of Norwich University to tear down and rebuild the Rugby Clubhouse at 676 Water Street. The existing structure is about 1150 square feet. The proposed building is 1664 square feet. The new building will be on approximately the same footprint as the original structure. It will include a mezzanine level with access to the locker rooms.

The new building addresses two deficiencies in the existing structure: poor drainage around the building foundation and ADA accessibility issues.

The existing clubhouse is a nonconforming structure because it has a setback of only about 16.5 feet from a side property boundary, rather than the 25-foot setback required by district standards. Owing to design elements to address ADA accessibility issues, a deck is proposed that will decrease property setback from 16.5 to about 8.5 feet, hence the need for a variance from the DRB.

Bill reviewed the criteria for granting a variance and stated that the proposed project appears to meet those criteria.

Paul commented that he supports the goals of the project, and feels the proposed structure will be a huge improvement over the current building. He also commented that it should be made clear that approval is being granted to reduce the side setback from 16.5 feet to 8.5 feet.

This project will also require conditional use approval from the DRB, but that hearing was not warned for tonight's meeting so cannot be approved at this time. The existing building is considered a nonconforming structure owing to a setback of less than the 25-foot district standard. Nonconforming structures require conditional use approval from the DRB if they are to be reconstructed and/or enlarged. The conditional use review for this project will be presented at the March meeting.

Donahue moved to approve a variance of an 8.5-foot setback from property line; Bright seconded. **Motion passed 4-0.**

**TABLED BUSINESS FROM JANUARY:**

As discussed at the January meeting, Homer Smith does not need a permit to operate a trash-drop. Another question raised last month was whether approval has been granted for the other aspects of his business. ZA Osiecki advised that the principal business operates under a permit granted to Scott Benoir around 2011 or 2012. Homer Smith bought the Benoir business and continues a permitted business operation.

Heidi Bennett has amended her sign permit, but due to a schedule conflict is unable to attend tonight's meeting. Her request for an exterior sign is clear, and that sign has already been installed. Somewhat less clear is the request for temporary signage. Application indicates a request for a portable sandwich board sign, but also requests use of a temporary banner to occasionally advertise book signings. It appears applicant anticipates two potential temporary signs, but that's not certain.

Colin moved to approve the exterior sign but table a decision on other signage until applicant can address the DRB; Donahue seconded. **Motion passed, 4-0.**

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Bill Smith briefly discussed legislative changes addressing housing.

ZA Osiecki discussed a couple of emerging projects in town. One is a new tenant of the former Bond Auto Parts store next to Convenience Plus on Main Street. Another is new tenant likely coming to the Topps Grocery on Route 12 between Northfield Falls and Northfield village.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next scheduled meeting of the DRB will be Thursday, March 25.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Brown moved to adjourn; Bright seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Mitch Osiecki*

Mitch Osiecki, DRB Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Zoning Administrator's Office. These minutes are subject to approval at the next regular DRB meeting.