

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
Minutes of May 23, 2024**

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm by Chair Bill Smith.

Roll Call: Present for the meeting were DRB members William Smith, Steve Davis, Joel DeLary, and Larry Garland. DRB member Tim Donahue was absent.

Others present were Mitch Osiecki, ZA & DRB Clerk; Rob Korrow (applicant); Ron Lyon (NU, applicant); Kendall Manning (NU, applicant); Louis Hodgetts (DuBois & King, for NU); Josh Crandall (Freeman French Freeman, for NU); Debra Wick (resident); and Dan Sivori (resident). All attendees were present at the Community Room.

Approval of Minutes: Steve Davis moved to approve the minutes of Mar 28, 2024. Joel DeLary seconded. **Vote to approve: 4-0.**

Permit #2024-11 Conditional Use/Change of Use for Korrow Real Estate (property at 420 VT RTE 12N)

Bill Smith recused himself, as he has represented the applicant on other matters.

Rob Korrow noted a slight change in plans from when the original application was submitted. The existing single-family dwelling will remain a SFD. The application before the DRB is now to enlarge and convert the existing garage into two one-bedroom apartments.

Rob Korrow presented an additional sketch plan showing the proposed dimensions of the garage/proposed apartment units, including setbacks from property boundaries.

Plans for a septic system have been submitted to the DEC. Rob has received verbal approval and expects written approval to be received soon.

No further questions from the DRB or any abutting property owners.

Motion: Joel DeLary moved to approve the application as presented; Larry Garland seconded. **Vote to approve: 3-0-1 (Bill Smith abstained).**

Permit #2024-26 Waiver of Zoning Setbacks for Kevin McCurdy (4408 VT Route 12A)

Kevin McCurdy wishes to build a small porch (4' x 12') addition on his home at 4408 VT Route 12A. Due to the proximity of the dwelling to the road, applicant requires a waiver of setbacks.

Kevin McCurdy is not present. There is a slight discrepancy between the setback waiver described on the application and that shown in the attached sketch plan.

The DRB has tabled this application until its June meeting. Mitch will contact Kevin and make sure he's aware of the date.

Permit #2024-27 Variance from Zoning District Dimensional Requirements and Conditional Use

Permit #2024-28 Site Plan Review

Both applications are associated with the planned demolition of two existing buildings and the construction of a new 13,000 SF building to house Norwich University's proposed Cyber Fusion Center on Park Avenue on the Norwich Campus.

Kendall Manning of Norwich University presented an overview of the project. NU plans to propose the discontinuance of Park Avenue. The Northfield Select Board has the authority to make that decision.

Plans are for the Communications Building & Hassett House to be razed to make way for the new structure.

Ron Lyon of Norwich University presented additional project details. Among the requests are for a variance of setback standards from Park Avenue (even though that road may well be discontinued by the completion of this project).

Included in Ron's presentation was a planned construction schedule.

Joel DeLary asked if the construction will disrupt traffic on University Drive. The project should not alter traffic flow on University Drive beyond the normal disruptions typical during construction.

Steve Davis asked why Norwich is seeking a variance if Park Avenue will be discontinued. Ron responded that discontinuing Park Avenue may be a longer process and helps prevent a situation where NU is in technical noncompliance with zoning regulations. The parking lot at the rear of the existing buildings will remain accessible upon completion of this project.

Bill Smith commented that Norwich might request a waiver of setbacks, rather than a variance. A waiver of setbacks might provide the relief needed with fewer complications than a variance.

Josh Crandall, of Freeman French Freeman, presented additional details of the Cyber Fusion Center facility.

Joel DeLary asked how the project will impact local utilities. Josh responded that impacts will be minimal.

Bill Smith asked whether the new facility would include any signage. Ron responded that there will likely be two signs, similar in scale to those on other nearby buildings.

Mitch asked for clarification that plans include the razing of both buildings on Park Avenue – the Communications Building and Hassett House. Kendall confirmed that is correct but added a caveat. There may be some interest in salvaging the Hassett House by moving it to a new location. Norwich is open to further discussions. No final decision has been made.

Upon further research, it was noted that current zoning regulations allow a waiver of setbacks only for a residential structure. A variance from zoning standards is the appropriate remedy for an institutional structure.

Louis Hodgetts, a civil engineer with DuBois & King, presented further details on this project. Louis noted that the project will largely use existing service lines (water, sanitation, and stormwater treatment). Water and sanitation lines to the current Hassett House structure will be abandoned.

Louis added that traffic flow is likely to be much like current patterns, except for the potential discontinuation of Park Avenue as previously noted.

The observation was made that Park Avenue is a Town Road, so discontinuation would follow an established protocol involving a public hearing and deliberation by the Select Board.

Ron Lyon offered to address any questions the DRB might have related to the conditional use request.

Bill Smith reviewed criteria for a waiver of setbacks and a variance from zoning standards and agreed that under current regulations, a waiver of setbacks is the appropriate remedy.

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

Permit #2024-28 Site Plan Review

Motion: Steve Davis moved to approve the Site Plan application as presented; Joel DeLary seconded.

Vote to approve: 4-0.

Permit #2024-27 Conditional Use and Variance

Motion: Steve Davis moved to approve the Conditional Use application as presented, including the variance from zoning district standards; Joel DeLary seconded.

Vote to approve: 4-0.

Mitch asked Ron Lyon to share the document he referred to during his presentation that details the variance from Park Avenue setbacks being requested. Ron agreed to forward that document, which will be appended to these minutes.

Other Business

Dan Sivori, resident on Winch Hill Road, addressed the DRB to explain his plans to construct a stone wall on his property. Dan had previously discussed this project with the Zoning Administrator, and there was some uncertainty whether the proposed wall might be considered a retaining wall, which might require an expensive review from an engineer.

Dan explained the nature of the wall he envisions. The DRB concluded that the wall, as proposed, would not be considered a retaining wall and is therefore exempt from the requirements of the zoning regulations pertaining to retaining walls.

Mitch will follow up with Dan to properly document the proposed structure.

Steve Davis brought up the issue of minimum lot sizes and minimum road frontage for lots in the Low Density Residential zoning district. Steve wondered whether the DRB might be able to consider approving smaller lots on request.

Brief discussion followed. The consensus of the DRB is that Zoning Regulations must determine what are allowable lot sizes. If the DRB were to have the ability to grant some leeway on lot sizes, there would have to be clear criteria for the Board to follow.

Mitch made a brief ZA report, noting that the project at 70 Depot Square is nearing completion. The restaurant is likely to open in September or October. All four apartments have found tenants.

Also, the Masonic Temple on South Maion Street is under contract. There should be a proposal in the pipeline soon to convert the building into several (possibly 12-16) apartments. There is an ongoing question to resolve as to the number of off-street parking spaces that might be necessary.

Next Meeting: June 27, 2024, at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment: Steve Davis moved to adjourn; Larry Garland seconded.

Vote to approve: 4-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm.

Mitch Osiecki

From: ronald lyon <rlyon1312@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 8:18 AM
To: Mitch Osiecki
Cc: Louis Hodgetts; Kendall B. Manning
Subject: Norwich CFC Variance

Good morning Mitch;

Thanks for your help on the permitting for the Norwich CFC project.

The hearing went well last night, and we appreciate your help on getting this on the agenda so quickly. That was really helpful in keeping the project schedule on track. I'm sorry that I didn't review the variance request regs earlier with you, and hope that didn't cause any concerns for you and the DRB. It certainly worked out fine.

The dimensions on the variance request are as follows:

The setback from Park Ave required under current regulations is 45 feet from the centerline.

The closest setback to the proposed new CFC building is 29.65 feet from the centerline, requiring a variance of 15.35 feet ($45 - 29.65 = 15.35$).

Just for comparison, the current closest setback to the existing buildings on the site is 27.57 feet from the centerline.

I will be available today over the phone or email so please call if you have any questions.

Once again, thanks for your assistance.

Regards
Ron