

**Charlemont Planning Board
May 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes
Charlemont Fairgrounds**

Members Participating: Bob Nelson Chair, Bill Harker, Gisela Walker, Carlene Hayden, Dan Miller

Other Attendees: Marguerite Willis, Helen & Frank Carcio, Patrick & Katie Banks, Phil and Mary Ellen Banks, Jerry Pratt, Frank & Jennifer Mooney, Andrea Santos, Margery Carlson, Jon Schaefer, Greg Rowehl.

Call to Order

Planning Board Chair Bob Nelson called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

Valentine Reid to Discuss Building on Cherrie Pierson/Mountain View Drive.

Valentine Reid discussed his plans to build on Cherrie Pierson or Mountain View Drive. He requested the names of companies to improve the road. He is also concerned about possible wetlands. He will contact Bill Harker about this concern. While the board went to the site, the property on Cherrie Pierson was the third one from the main road, not the corner lot as the Board had thought.

ANR (Approval Not Required) Plan Signatures

Ed Muszynski, the surveyor for Carla LaGrassa presented ANR plans on her behalf. She owns land on Maxwell Road and desires to put much of the land in trust with the Franklin Land Trust for conservation purposes. Other lots and parcels are also being created to combine with the lot on which the house is located and for other purposes. The board approved and signed the ANR.

The Board also reviewed an ANR plan that had been previously submitted and explained by William Stephens, who wants to reconfigure three of his lots on Main Street in the expectation of selling one. The Board approved and signed the ANR.

Great Outdoors Special Permit Hearing for Tube Rental, Parking Shuttle, Retail at 78 Main Street

Nelson opened the hearing at 6:23 p.m.

Helen Carcio gave an overview of the special permit for which they are applying. The Great Outdoors is mainly about tubers, but for the future they are also interested in opening up their lot to parking for tourists. Through their shuttling people on buses, they can monitor what people are bringing on the bus and keep large coolers and unsafe tubes from being on the river. The state of Massachusetts is deciding on age limits for tubing and limiting the number of tubers allowed on the river per day. These are requirements to which The Great Outdoors will abide. They use surveillance cameras to monitor the parking lot. Regarding the desire for 300 parking spaces, which will take up half of their four acres, they see it as keeping dozens of cars from driving around and parking in inappropriate locations in the area. They expect to have three people directing traffic during busy times. There are three types of people who will use their lot. People who rent or buy a tube from them, people who bring their own tubes and people who just want to park. The people who just want to park may have two cars and just need a place down river to park one car. Both The Great Outdoors and Hyytinen Hollow have agreed that they will supply personal flotation devices to everyone to whom they rent a tube and tubers under a certain age must be accompanied by an adult. They have life jackets available to rent or buy for people who bring their own tubes. Marguerite Willis said that the Massachusetts CMR requirements will not regulate anyone who brings their own tubes. Hayden cited concerns with those just paying to park and bringing their own tubes but not being subject to any regulations by the State or the Board. Helen Carcio suggested that maybe there should be two permits, one for tubing and another for shuttling.

Walker asked about the store and asked why it is on this permit. Hayden said renting tubes is part of the store and it was previously questioned that not all aspects of the operation were included in the permit, so in an effort to ensure the permit reflected the whole operation, she was responsible for its being on the application. It was later found that the store was previously granted a separate permit and did not need to be included in this one.

The traffic flow is likely to change with 300 cars versus the current 100 cars. There have been no accidents and very few issues in the past. The entrance is being widened by four feet on each side to further improve access.

It is the understanding of Crabapple Whitewater that the proposed 200 allowed tubers is a total number whether they start at Zoar Gap or float down to East Charlemont.

They will have a dumpster and two Carson Cans.

Jennifer Mooney contested the use of the right of way on their property through their driveway east of the Post Office, however the Planning Board takes no position on disagreements about a deeded right of way. She also said in good conscience, they would not load up a bus of people to drop off at Zoar picnic area without life jackets. Life jackets should be required for all. Also, they should not allow coolers, reducing alcohol usage as even used water bottles are tossed in the river. Additionally, she questioned should the shuttle be a completely separate business?

Katie Banks said that shuttling is just transportation so one would not require life jackets. Should the tubing company be the same company as a transportation company. She is also concerned about the cannabis paraphernalia being sold at the store and how it may suggest that use of marijuana on the river is acceptable.

Greg Rowehl mentioned smoke from the Great Outdoors fire pit impacting their patrons who dine out on the deck.

Marguerite Willis said that the river usage may be lower this year, since last year the pools in Holyoke and Springfield were closed due to the pandemic. She also suggested that maybe the length of the permit be short, two or three years, in order to better understand how the fast changing dynamics of the town.

It was suggested that the parking area be staked out and that the Board and possibly interested parties see the area planned for the lower parking lot. The Board will make a site visit prior to the next meeting.

Jerry Pratt spoke of the large number of unregulated people on the river. The permit has merit, but needs to be more thought out. He suggests they decide if they are going to be a tube company or a shuttle company.

Andrea Santos was very concerned that with 300 cars at four people per car would be 1200 tubes and could lead to additional river congestion.

At 8:10, Walker moved that the hearing be continued to May 27, 2021 at 7:00 pm. and the Board will do a site visit before the hearing at 5:00 pm. The motion was seconded by Hayden and approved unanimously. The hearing was continued at 8:15 p.m.

Board Discussion

There was some discussion about how to move forward; whether to separate out the shuttle and tubing businesses and what to allow in regard to the number of cars.

Adjournment

At 8:34 pm on a motion by Nelson and seconded by Walker; the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Nelson

Documents viewed in the Planning Board meeting of 5/20/2021*

1. Agenda for meeting of 5/20/2021
2. The Great Outdoors Special Permit Application
3. Carla LaGrassa Maxwell Road Plot Plan
4. Bill Stephens 214 Main Street Plot plan

*Documents are stored in their respective files