

mgjusti

From: Steven Bengtson <swb60@cox.net>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2020 12:40 PM
To: mgjusti
Subject: Metro Realty Application

Dear Maureen,

The proposed residential development project being planned by Metro Realty abuts land owned by CSBF, LLC, who is entered into a lease arrangement with Cold Spring Brook Farm, Inc. Said property is used for an agricultural enterprise producing greenhouse and vegetable crops. CSBF, LLC wishes to add to the record that such agricultural activities involve heavy equipment operating at all hours (including after sunset and before sunrise), pesticide applications in close proximity to the proposed development, and a crop protection license that allows hunting all of the year. It should also be noted that all aspects of crop production - including livestock production - are all potentialities for this property. We wish to make the scope of our agricultural activities public and on the record in the event that any current or future tenant, manager, or owner of this residential development enters objections to those activities.

We would also like to suggest an extended buffer zone between our property and the proposed development, as well as a fence to keep residents of the development from wandering onto our property.

Sincerely,

Steven Bengtson
860-989-5436

Michael Christensen
860-543-5026

Eric Petersen
860-840-0287

CSBF, LLC
15 Stonehedge Drive
Newington, CT 06111

Town of Berlin

Department of Economic Development

BERLIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 6, 2019

240 KENSINGTON ROAD, BERLIN - Room 8, Town Hall, 6:00 P.M.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

David Cyr, Chairman
Tim Grady

Peter Campanelli, Treasurer
Chris Coppola

ABSENT:

Robert Sisti

Ed Egazarian, Vice- Chairman

STAFF:

Chris Edge, Economic Development Director
Kristen Grabowski, Recording Secretary

Chairman Dave Cyr called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

1. Public Comments – Growing Facility/Metro Realty

Ed Grimm and Pierre Bennerup were in attendance to discuss a potential marijuana growing facility along the Chamberlain Highway. It was noted that the property is currently zoned POD, and it is not residential. The structure of the facility was discussed, noting that it would be a clear plexi-roof, and likely closed with grow lights. The facility would be used strictly for growing, and there would not be any dispensary.

The Commission discussed potential permits required, and it was noted that medical licenses in the State of Connecticut are saturated. The license would be for recreational use as it is unlikely that the state will give out additional medicinal licenses. It was noted that the potential project is in the preliminary phase, and it will need to appear before the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Jeff Sager discussed his property on Deming Road, noting that he would like to develop it in the near future. He discussed successful projects that his firm has completed in Berlin including Orchard Ridge and Stonebridge. He explained that Metro Realty primarily focuses on commercial property, but they have completed successful residential and multi-family housing projects in Berlin, Farmington, South Windsor and West Hartford.

Town of Berlin

Department of Economic Development

He discussed his desire to develop the property along Deming Road, making it a residential property. He noted that there are a substantial number of millennials and empty nesters that are renting versus buying property, and a rental opportunity would be ideal. He noted that need for guidance from the EDC regarding the property, explaining that he would prefer to build an affordable senior product similar to the Stonebridge property. He explained that it is highly desirable, and there is often a waiting list. The main benefits to this type of development are no school aged children and that the project will likely include no interior corridors, and therefore the units are very private.

He went to discuss his belief in the multi-family market, not just in Berlin, but throughout Greater Hartford. His market rate developments are attracting millennials with an approximate income of \$70,000 to \$90,000 per year. These millennials are from a diverse geography, with almost 75% of them coming from outside of Hartford County and about 40% from outside of Connecticut. This is due to the great employment opportunities at firms such as Eversource, Comcast, United Technologies, Cigna, ESPN and Stanley Works. This generation likes the smaller spaces with amenities and a neighborhood feel.

The Commission discussed the site, and Mr. Sager noted that he could potentially put 72 units on the parcel. He discussed the market, noting that the trends have changed. High-end rental units are highly desirable. The Commission also discussed the impact of the potential project on the affordable rate, and Director Edge explained that between this project, and another recently approved project, the Town would need an additional 40 units to meet the 10% threshold.

Commissioner Coppola moved to support the development of a senior affordable housing project. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady, and it carried unanimously.

Text Amendment

Application: Zoning Text Amendment Berlin Zoning Regulations Section XI.BB. Workforce Housing Development (WHD)
Applicant: Ben Tripp, Metro Realty Group Ltd. for 833 Deming Road LLC & Berlin Remnant Land Parcels LLC
Proposal: Modify text to the existing Workforce Housing Development Regulations

PROPOSAL

Text Amendment of The Metro Realty Group, LTD to amend Berlin Zoning Regulations Section XI.BB Workforce Housing (WFD)

ADDITIONAL TEXT CONSIDERATIONS:

The proposed Section XI.BB should be further modified to correct a typographic errors as follows:

1. XI.BB.3. Zoning Requirements. "A ~~WFD~~ WHD housing site... ". Throughout the section the acronym used is WHD, WFD appears to be a typographical error originating in the original text. And,
2. XI.BB.3.I.iv. the sentence appears awkward, staff suggests adding an "s" to "passenger" to clarify. "Parking facilities for both passengers and vehicles shall be convenient to building entrances... "

STAFF COMMENTS

1. Comments from the Economic Development Commission (EDC) are have not been received.
2. Confirmation is pending from the Building Official to confirm that the reduced separation distance between structures is not in conflict with Building Codes.
3. Comments from the Capital Region Council of Governments: (attached in their entirety)
COMMENT: *The staff of the Regional Planning Commission of the Capitol Region Council of Governments has reviewed this zoning referral and finds no apparent conflict with regional plans and policies or the concerns of neighboring towns. Resulting traffic impacts from proposed densities appear to be adequately reviewed based on existing approval criteria. Staff encourages access to transit and incorporation of low impact development techniques as additional considerations for higher density development. Staff commends proposed parking reduction requirements and maximizing the preservation of open space.*

BACKGROUND:

The applicant has been working with staff over several months to develop language that is consistent with current trends in housing and will enhance the supply of affordable of housing in compliance with CGS 8-30g requirements while maintaining consistency with the POCD.

Along with James Mahoney, Berlin's Economic Development Coordinator, the applicant provided a brief overview of the intended submissions at the May 21, 2020 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. The Commission indicated the applicant should move forward and noted Metro Realty has been a "good partner" on similar projects in the Town. The existing regulations were developed and implemented for their projects known as Fieldstone Crossing WHD on Deming Road near Episcopal Road and Rivers Edge WHD on Deming Road at Bacon Lane.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO BZR §XI.BB WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The applicant is expected to explain and substantiate the proposed language changes at the public hearing. The Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority's 2019 Multifamily Design, Construction and Sustainability Standards – CHFA, which have been adopted by the CT Department of Housing (DOH) has been provided by the applicant to support the amendments. The document will be posted on the Town website with the other meeting materials.

Eligibility

If the Zone Map amendment is approved along with the text amendment, which includes modifying alternative eligible locations, to include properties in "Part OT and part R-43", then the parcels as noted in the Site Plan application would be eligible for a WHD. The amendment proposes allowing contiguous parcels. It is understandable that a property owner may not want to merge contiguous parcels prior to approval, staff would recommend that parcels be merged prior to permits being issued for development.

Zoning Requirements/Standards

The applicant has indicated to staff that market trends, including work from home and outdoor amenities, have influenced amendments to allow increased patio and deck space, and add walking paths as allowed in the outdoor/lawn areas.

Parking Requirements

The amendment proposes a reduction in required parking per unit and allows for parking within required yard. While there are currently no sidewalks along the State, Deming Road, the development is within a half-mile of the Home Depot Plaza and less than a mile from the Berlin Turnpike where there is public transportation. The area also has shopping and dining options. It should be noted that the CRCOG comments commend the reduction in parking.

Affordability Guidelines

The applicant is expected to explain to the Commission's satisfaction how all units in the proposed WHD are eligible to be counted towards the Town's goal for affordable units in accordance with CGS 8-30g. Requirements for an Affordability Plan remain unchanged.

Consistency with the 2013 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

Staff believes the amendments would not affect the consistency of Section XI.BB. Workforce Housing Development, with the POCD and may provide additional opportunities for alternative housing.

