

TOWN OF AMHERST
Planning Board

June 19, 2019

APPROVED

In attendance: Michael Dell Orfano- Chair, John D'Angelo-Selectman Ex-Officio, Arnold Rosenblatt, Bill Stoughton (voting for Rich Hart), Marilyn Peterman, Sally Wilkins, Eric Hahn, and Clifford Harris.

Michael Dell Orfano called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee – Discussion on the current draft of the bike/pedestrian plan.

Chris Buchanan, Chairman of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and Jared Hardner, member of the same committee and the Conservation Commission, presented the Multi-Modal Master Plan. The current goal is to inform the Planning Board of the Committee's draft plan and work with them to incorporate it into the Master Plan.

During the presentation, it was explained that there are 210 miles of roadways and 25+ miles of off-road trails throughout Amherst. The hope is to "build"/modify a network that includes both roadside and off-road solutions, allowing any type of user (walker, hiker, cyclist, etc.) to more easily access the town. This network would be implemented over time, in accordance with regularly scheduled roadwork.

More information is available through the Bicycle/Pedestrian Facebook page and on the town's website.

2. CASE #: PZ11364-052219 - Robert H. Jacobson Revocable Trust (Owner) & R. Carter Scott, President, TransFormations (Applicant), 17 Christian Hill Road, PIN #: 005-100-000 & 005-148-000 – Discussion to present the potential Agrihood Development of Lots 005-100-000 & 005-148-000 utilizing a wide variety of unit types and styles per the IIHO. Zoned Residential/Rural.

S. Wilkins sat out of the discussion, as an abutter to the proposed project.

Ken Clinton, of Meridian Land Services, and R. Carter Scott, of TransFormations, led the discussion of the proposed Agrihood. Mr. Clinton stated that the property, Jacobson Farm, is made up of two parcels. Parcel 5-148 is approximately 36 acres and consists of land gently sloping from the street to the east. A good portion of this parcel is wet, there is a flood zone, and it abuts the south end of the Great Meadow. There are several former fields and pasturelands that have been used less and less over the years. Parcel 5-100 is approximately 94 acres and is more substantially sloped. There are wet pockets on this parcel and there is also a seasonal stream.

The two parcels are about 130 acres combined. This development is in the early discussion stages, and surveying is currently in process. Mr. Scott's plan is to have about 75% of the area preserved as open space.

TOWN OF AMHERST
Planning Board

June 19, 2019

APPROVED

Mr. Scott gave a brief history of his work. His intentions include: building net plus homes, that do not utilize fossil fuels in their yearly maintenance; homes that are resilient, including battery back-up systems, back-up heating, solar energy, and local food production; and carbon-storing farming and housing.

Mr. Scott gave a conceptual plan for the site. The antique farmhouse on the property would be restored. A barn on the property would contain 1st floor pick-up for the CSA and possibly a public area, where the 2nd floor would contain a rental property. There will be seasonal crops that can be rotated around the acreage, permanent walking paths, and a community hiking path with trailhead parking. There will be a mix of housing types including: single family houses, pocket neighborhoods, over 55+ single floor living, duplexes, over 55+ 2 bedroom units, etc. The mixed housing will be built to make it difficult to discern which type is which. Mr. Scott explained that the town seems to want the following types of housing: affordable/workforce, Over 55, 2-family (attached), single-floor units, and 0, 1, 2 bedroom units – all of which he is proposing.

This property will be connectable to 6 properties managed by the Conservation Commission. There are 3 identified vernal pools and 1 second-order stream in the area.

In response to a question from Michael Dell Orfano, Mr. Scott stated that the plan is for the Agrihood to produce more energy than it consumes, produce more food than it can use, and store carbon in the soil and the homes.

Ryan and Mike Hvizda, of The Hvizda Team, presented to the Board information regarding the housing shortage in New Hampshire and Amherst itself, as it relates to the Agrihood proposal.

In response to a question from Michael Dell Orfano, Mr. Hvizda explained that there is clearly a demand for housing in all segments of the market currently. This proposed project will touch the needs of Amherst housing in a socially responsible way. It can also put Amherst on the map for a housing approach that should be promoted.

In response to a question from Michael Dell Orfano, Ms. Hvizda stated that the more expensive houses in town are not currently selling easily due to the fact that older and younger generations are currently competing for the same market of less expensive houses. There are also not enough rental properties in town. This proposed project would look to address many of these issues.

Ian McSweeney, of Farmland Consulting, LCC, presented to the Board regarding the conservation and agriculture aspects of the plan. He explained that the Jacobson Farm has been a community asset for 100 years and the plan would allow that to continue in many ways. There will be diversified food production as part of the Agrihood. This land is also close to the town's schools, and it is anticipated that the children could walk there to see the farm, as they probably did in the past.

In response to a question from John D'Angelo, Mr. Scott explained that they have no exact acreage amounts of each item, or exact housing unit numbers yet. There will be presented at the

TOWN OF AMHERST
Planning Board

June 19, 2019

APPROVED

conditional use permit meeting. John D'Angelo stated that this type of creativity is what was trying to be encouraged when the IIHO was passed in the first place.

Arnold Rosenblatt stated that if the public is troubled by these 130 acres being put to use in any way, they should remember that the town had the opportunity to buy this piece of land as an open space project and failed to, due to lack of will and fortitude. He is not sure if the project is a good one yet, but explained that the Board will be scrutinizing it carefully. He also stated that no bonuses will be granted unless the Board concludes there is a benefit to the town.

Marilyn Peterman stated that the energy-efficient component of the homes is intriguing. The town wants a diversity of housing types and this proposal comes up with a way to get that while also creating a community with a mixed demographic. Combining new farmland with community and education is positive. This project could be very innovative and showcase Amherst in the forefront of zoning.

Bill Stoughton stated that this development abuts wetland and the Great Meadow and is also close to an important aquifer. The Conservation Commission will have a concern to protect the water sources near this development. He hopes that the application will give specifics for these items, and what the plan is to also keep the farm runoff from entering the aquifer as well. He also explained that he hopes the developer looks at the plan to make this project carbon neutral, as that idea can be easily overstated.

In response to a question from Bill Stoughton, Mr. Scott stated that the plan is to eventually meet with the Conservation Commission regarding an easement on some of the land. If that cannot be achieved, they will return to the Planning Board to seek a restrictive covenant to preserve the open space on this land. The proposed trails will be open to the public.

Michael Dell Orfano explained that the (future) applicant has land rights that must be respected. This development can be built if done so within the ordinance.

Public Comment:

Daryl D'Angelo, 9 Woodland Drive, asked what the plan is for the farmland portion of the development. Mr. Scott explained that the farm land will be sold to an entity in a way which allows the land to be farmed for no cost. This may be through a 503c or something similar.

Scott Stimpert, 7 Brimstone Hill Road, discussed a letter he had written regarding the Agrihood and his concerns with it. He has concerns with the lack of detail presented so far, the developer's past business transactions, and the fact that this development will change the fundamental character of the neighborhood.

Simon Sarris, 8 New Boston Road, stated that he is unconvinced that this is a good long-term plan with the right developer. He explained that the proposed houses in this development have more amenities than most on the market, and so he's unsure how that will equate to more

TOWN OF AMHERST
Planning Board

June 19, 2019

APPROVED

affordable housing. He hopes the developer might take vernacular and cues from the Village, instead of leaving the development as just another cul-de-sac.

Laurie Stevens, 17 Christian Hill Road, gave a brief history on the property. It was a dairy farm until 1978 and was farmed until last year to feed local cows. The trustees of the property have three choices: 1) keep the property 2) try to keep the land as open as possible 3) develop it. The trustees chose to go with #2 and reached out to Ian McSweeney for help. She hopes that the public will wait for the application to be submitted and give it a chance.

OTHER BUSINESS:

3. Minutes: June 5, 2019

**Arnold Rosenblatt moved to defer the minutes of June 5, 2019 until the next meeting. Sally Wilkins seconded.
All in favor.**

The Board discussed a request for pet waste signage in a right of way.

**Arnold Rosenblatt moved to have the proposal presented to the Planning Board.
Sally Wilkins seconded.
All in favor.**

The Board discussed if there are any areas of the Master Plan that can be worked on currently, before it is slated to be formally addressed in 2022.

**Clifford Harris moved to defer the conversation regarding the Master Plan, and invite Selectman Peter Lyon to be part of the discussion at the next meeting on July 17th. Arnold Rosenblatt seconded.
All in favor.**

**Clifford Harris moved to adjourn at 9:42 p.m. Arnold Rosenblatt seconded.
All in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude

Minutes approved: July 17, 2019