

BATH PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

July 20, 1999

A meeting of the Bath Planning Board was called on 7-20-99 for the purpose of conducting regular business.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Bob Oxton, Chair
Jim Harper, Vice Chair
Margy Lowe
Paul Karass

MEMBERS ABSENT

Marjorie Hawkes
George Pollard, Associate Member

STAFF PRESENT

Jim Upham, City Planner
Marsha Hinton, Recording Secretary

Bob Oxton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 15, 1999, REGULAR MEETING

There being no discussion on the June 15, 1999, meeting minutes, Bob Oxton, Chair, asked for a motion.

JIM HARPER MADE A MOTION; SECONDED BY MARGY LOWE TO APPROVE THE JUNE 15, 1999 MEETING MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.

UNANIMOUS AGREE.

Old Business: No old business.

New Business: Site Plan Amendment -- parking lot at 832 Washington Street (Map 26, Lot 163-1); Al Austin, applicant.

Jim Upham, City Planner, stated a letter requesting a site plan amendment had been submitted by the applicant to change the species of trees to be used in the super buffer and to place large rocks at the western edge of the parking lot. This was discussed at the smaller staff committee level and it was decided that this is something that should be considered by the entire Board. Mr. Upham added that he felt the change to the species of trees is not a problem because pine trees would need more sun than this buffer receives so a different species such as hemlock or spruce might do better in that location. However, the large rocks needed more than just minor review.

Al Austin outlined the history of this project. He discussed the decision to change the species of trees used in the buffer. He reported having difficulty getting contractors to pave the lot due to their respective

schedules. When the parking lot was established he became aware of a safety issue in that cars could potentially go over the edge of the parking area and down a steep slope. So in order not to delay paving any further, to avoid large construction equipment from destroying the paving later and to provide for safety, he placed large rocks at this western edge of the lot to prevent an accident. He was now before the Board to request their approval for these changes and to request that he be allowed to place smaller rocks at the front of the parking lot to keep cars from going across the grassy areas between the parking lot and the sidewalk, which they are now doing. He passed out photographs of the parking lot and photographs of various locations around the City that used large rocks for various purposes. He stated that one of the various properties shown had up to 76 rocks and another had 55. He pointed out that he has experienced a good deal of vandalism to this property and that vandalism to rocks is almost non-existent.

Bob Oxtan, Chair, stated that he was having difficulty with the use of these rocks as being consistent with the surrounding neighborhood and would prefer to see some other type of barrier used.

The Board held discussion on the appropriateness of the use of rocks along the front of the parking lot on Washington Street, other types of barriers such as bushes, safety issues, vandalism, and snow removal.

Jim Harper complemented the applicant on the wonderful job he has done in improvements to this site.

Bob Oxtan, Chair, stated that his concerns were that this property is really the gateway to a very nice street and that has to be considered. He stated that he can get past the rocks in the back of the lot and completely understands the need to change the species of trees, but rocks in the front are a real sticking point.

PAUL KARASS MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY JIM HARPER, TO APPROVE THE REQUEST FOR THE ADDITION OF ROCKS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE PARKING LOT AND THE CHANGE IN THE SPECIES OF TREES TO SPRUCE AND FIR ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE PARKING LOT.

UNANIMOUS AGREE.

New Business: Review of the 1999 CDBG Housing Improvement Program -
- to determine consistency with Comprehensive Plan.

Jim Upham, City Planner, informed the Board that this is a requirement of phase 2 of the application for a Community Development Block Grant. The Board

needs to review for compliance of the project with the comprehensive plan.

Al Smith, applicant, stated that the City received a block grant in March that granted \$300,000.00 toward the rehab of single-family and multi-family residences and to promote homeownership among lower to middle income families. He directed the Board's attention to the details as outlined in his correspondence to the Board. He reported on the status of other projects around the city.

The Board held discussion on funding, the part this grant would play for lower to middle income home purchases through this program, the City's contribution and the estimated amount to be used per structure for rehab work.

John James, City Councilor, stated that he was in favor of providing home ownership opportunities to people, citing the 50% rental to ownership ratio in the City of Bath as compared with the 25% rental to ownership ratio in other parts of Maine. However, he expressed concerns with turning existing homes into multi unit sites for lower income people who would use more of the tax base than they would provide. He stressed that he hoped the Board would take this into consideration when reviewing such projects.

Bob Oxtan, Chair, thanked the Council member for his comments.

JIM HARPER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY PAUL KARASS, THAT THE PLANNING BOARD FINDS THAT THE 1999 CDBG HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE CITY OF BATH'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

UNANIMOUS AGREE.

New Business: Status Report -- New Meadows River Watershed Study.

Jim Harper, City Planner, stated that he and George Pollard were members of a committee that was started by West Bath and Brunswick to develop a plan to improve water quality in New Meadows Lake. He directed the Board's attention to a letter written by Bowdoin students and signed by him which described in more detail efforts to clean this area up by working with residents to reduce or eliminate non-source pollution. The goal was to open it up eventually for shell fishing. He stated that either he or George Pollard would be able to update the Board on the progress of this project.

The Board held discussion on New Meadows Lake and the problems that are currently evident.

Other Business: Recognition of Tim Vrabel's 10 years of service

Jim Upham, City Planner, stated that in light of Mr. Vrabel's many years of public service, some sort of public recognition should be made.

The Board held discussion on various ways to show appreciation and it was decided that a request would be made to the City Council to present Mr. Vrabel with some memento of his service.

Other Business: CMP Substation Inspection

Jim Harper asked what Mr. Upham was working on at the substation on Washington Street.

Jim Upham, City Planner, stated that CMP is adding a small utility building, that was approved by the staff committee about a month ago. As part of this project, and as a good neighbor, CMP is working with the City on improving the site and to prevent parking between the fence and Washington Street.

Bob Oxton, Chair, stated that when small projects that would only require staff review it might be a good idea just to update the Board so that they could be aware of the project.

Jim Upham, City Planner, said that this was an excellent idea because citizens often asked the Board members about various projects and they needed to be aware of what was going on.

**PAUL KARASS MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MARGY LOWE, TO
ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:30 P.M.**

UNANIMOUS AGREE.

Minutes prepared by Marsha Hinton, Recording Secretary