

CITY OF LEWISTON
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
MINUTES for June 28, 2010

- I. **ROLL CALL:** The meeting was held in the City Council Chambers on the First Floor of City Hall and was called to order at 5:30 p.m. Chairperson, Lucy Bisson, chaired the meeting.

Members in Attendance: Lucy Bisson, Bruce Damon, Denis Fortier, Trinh Burpee, Paul Robinson, Eric Potvin and Kevin Morissette

Members Absent: None

Associate Member Present: Michael Marcotte

Associate Member Absent: Elizabeth Dube

Staff Present: David Hediger, City Planner, Gil Arsenault, Director of Planning & Code and Cathy Lekberg, Administrative Assistant, Economic & Community Development

- II. **ADJUSTMENT TO THE AGENDA:** None

- III. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None

- VI. **PUBLIC MEETING:**

A proposal by Platz Associates on behalf of Maine Workforce Housing LLC for The Lofts at Bates Mill, consisting of 52 units of mixed income rental housing within the Bates Mill Complex, Mill #2 at 36 Chestnut Street.

David read staff comments to the Board. Nathan Szantan from Maine Workforce Housing LLC presented to the Board a brief description of the project. He stated that his organization creates mixed income level housing units, which allows people from different walks of life to be together in the building. He stated they have completed three projects in Portland, one in Biddeford and one in Exeter, NH and that these are all mixed income housing unit projects. He stated that David Hediger's memo was very detailed regarding the project and opened it up for questions for the Board.

Paul asked how well does mixed income unit's work and Nathan stated very well. All units look the same, but the market rate units have beautiful views. He stated they do thorough screenings of tenants to make sure they have good people renting out the units. He stated that these screenings save them from problems down the road. He also stated most people do not care if the building is mixed income.

Eric asked about the financing and ownership of the building and Nathan stated they own the buildings and hire a property management company to maintain them. Lucy asked if there would be a property manager on site full time and

Nathan stated probably not full time but at least one day or up to five days there will be a manager available.

Bruce stated this was the kind of project we are looking for in the Bates Mill. . He is happy to see a professional development company doing this and hopes this is just Phase I, and there will be more to come.

Trinh asked about the Fire Department's concerns and Steve Myers from Platz Associates explained the concerns. He explained that the Fire Department was concerned that there were corridors with dead ends and also they would not allow a corridor opening into an open space. Steve stated they would put a temporary corridor to meet the codes. He stated there was a travel distance concern also and a firewall would be discussed when building permits are pulled.

Nathan stated that the dust chutes in the rear of the building would be coming down to reveal the windows.

Bruce asked how they would handle vacancy rates and would vacancy be delayed because they are fussy about the tenants and Nathan stated there is no problem with vacancy rates as people know these are good buildings and there is also a no smoking policy which many people like.

Paul asked about pets and Nathan stated declawed cats would be allowed.

Kevin commented on the 34 low income units and Nathan stated that in order to get the tax credits, this was the amount of low income units required. Nathan stated they are also applying for 13 Section 8 vouchers from the Lewiston Housing Authority.

Mike asked if these units would take people away from other areas of the City, and Nathan stated they possibly could, but also people from other towns too as long as they meet the criteria.

Public Comments: None

- The Board members asked about traffic studies and Steve Myers stated traffic had to be addressed as part of the application. Parking spaces were discussed. It was agreed that 92 parking spaces was adequate. Lucy asked about security, and Nathan stated the building would be patrolled. Paul asked if, when the Lincoln Street parking garage was completed, they would need more parking in the future. The answer was no, there would be no additional parking needed once this project is completed.

The following motion was made.

MOTION: by **Denis Fortier** to accept that the application submitted by Platz Associates is complete and meets all of the necessary criteria contained in the Zoning and Land Use Code, including Article XIII, Section 4 and 5 of the Zoning and Land Use Code and to grant

approval to Maine Workforce Housing LLC for the Lofts at Bates Mill, consisting of 52 units of mixed income rental housing within the Bates Mill Complex, Mill #2 at 36 Chestnut Street, subject to any concerns raised by the Planning Board or staff.

Second by **Paul Robinson**.

VOTED: 7-0 (Passed).

V. OTHER BUSINESS:

- a. Recommendation to the City Council for the disposition of 269-271 Park Street.

Mark McComas presented to the Board and stated that 269-271 Park Street is a city-owned building which was acquired through tax foreclosure in November, 1992 and has been unoccupied and in a dilapidated condition since then. The property is 7,000 square feet and is located on the corner of Park Street and Maple Street and consists of a vacant two-story residential brick structure and is one of three structures making up the Androscoggin Mill Block listed on the National Historic Register. He stated that Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) proposes to develop the existing structure into two large condominium units that will be sold to private buyers who meet specific income requirements.

Lucy asked when the property is sold to Coastal Enterprises, Inc. would it be taxed by the City and Mark stated yes. He stated CEI will be asking \$125,000 per unit for a total of \$250,000, and the City would be receiving \$50,000. Lucy asked about parking and would it require four parking spaces, and David stated because the structure is on the National Historic Register, they do not need to meet the parking requirements.

Kevin asked about a maintenance plan for the building and Mark stated the owner's would be responsible for that.

MOTION: by **Denis Fortier** to send a favorable recommendation for the City Council's consideration for the disposition of 269-271 Park Street to be redeveloped for residential use.

Second by **Paul Robinson**.

VOTED: 7-0 (Passed).

- b. Discussion regarding the regulation of marijuana dispensaries.

David gave an update to the Board regarding the marijuana dispensaries and stated it was recommended to extend the moratorium. He stated there were seven requests for the district. Gil stated that one dispensary would be licensed for each district. Eric asked if the marijuana would be grown inside and distributed somewhere else. Gil stated that it would have to be grown inside. Gil asked the Board to email any suggestions or comments to him or David.

- c. Discussion regarding parking standards in the downtown.

David stated to the Board that Administration has asked staff to discuss whether the parking standards for the greater downtown area should be relaxed in an effort to provide redevelopment and avoid creating parking that may not be needed in an urban development.

Lucy stated that the winter parking ban from November 15th to April 15th is not practicable. She stated they should have bans when there is a storm only. Gil stated that the winter ban works against small businesses. Lucy stated that when there is a storm, people will find a place to park. David brought up the hair salon Orbitz that moved into the downtown. He stated they were required to add 10 – 12 parking spaces at their business. Bruce stated large companies are provided parking with garages being constructed, but small businesses are not, which sends a mixed message in the downtown. He stated we should try to reduce heat zones and add more green space and stop paving over green space. He agreed with Lucy that the winter parking ban makes no sense. Eric stated the parking needs to be changed and he has information from other cities regarding this issue.

- d. Any other business Planning Board Members may have relating to the duties of the Lewiston Planning Board.

Kevin stated he would like to review the vision for downtown. He could not understand the reason for allowing 65% of low income units. He stated there needs to be more market rate units in the Mill Buildings. Gil stated that they could not get the tax credits without the 34 low income units required. He stated he would like to make this a point of discussion at the next meeting.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Lucy stated that we have our new City Council, new City Administrator and a new budget in place. She stated it is time to schedule a meeting with City Council to discuss and make changes to the Zoning and Land Use Matrix and Code ordinances. Everything is at a standstill until a meeting is scheduled. She realizes that this is vacation time for a lot of people, but City issues continue year round. Gil stated that a meeting would probably not happen until September. Lucy stated she would like to see something in writing and scheduled.

VII. READING OF MINUTES:

Draft Meeting Minutes for May 24, 2010. The following motion was made.

MOTION: by **Denis Fortier** to approve the May 24, 2010 minutes as presented. Second by **Paul Robinson**.

VOTED: **7-0 (Passed)**

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: The following motion was made to adjourn.

MOTION: by **Denis Fortier** that this meeting adjourn at 7:35 p.m. Second by **Paul Robinson.**

VOTED: **7-0 (Passed).**

The next regularly scheduled meeting is for Monday, July 12, 2010, at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Denis E. Fortier, Secretary