

Dorset Zoning Board of Adjustment
Regular Meeting Minutes
7-20-2020
(Via ZOOM Call)

Members Present: John LaVecchia, Kevin O'Toole, Tuck Rawls, David Wilson, Bill Bridges, Ruth Stewart, Ed Tanenhaus, Martha Merwin, Patrick McGuire

Others Present: Ryan Downey, Billy Brownlee, Vickie & Peter Haskins, Elisabeth Johnson, Dick McDonough, Chris Ponessi, Rob Gaiotti, Tyler Yandow

John LaVecchia called the meeting to order at 7:06pm

HN Williams: Expansion of a pre-existing non-conforming building:

Billy Brownlee presented the application for HN Williams Store. He noted that as part of their State highway right of way permit for the store expansion some changes to parking and access were made. The State required the area near the front entrance to be turned to grass to restrict parking to the areas provided. Additionally an area just south of the store was also turned to grass. B. Brownlee noted that neither area was considered parking under the permits. After these changes were made and during the early stages of COVID all access was funneled through the north entrance to the store. He also noted that they planned and began to build a handicapped access with a vestibule that was slated to be 54 square feet (under the 120 square feet requiring a permit). However when they went to set the foundation of the vestibule they had to make it larger than anticipated, which pushed the size of the project over the limit requiring a permit. Ruth Stewart asked if the addition would be covered, B. Brownlee answered that the vestibule was enclosed but the handicap ramp was not. Kevin O'Toole asked how many entrances the store had at this point. B. Brownlee stated that the store will have 3 entrances when this project is complete. Discussion ensued about parking and any impacts to the existing parking allotment. B. Brownlee noted that 1 parking space was lost to the vestibule and the new southeast entrance. Dave Wilson asked if the front entrance was going to be permanently shut off, B. Brownlee answered yes. Marth Merwin noted that all the changes have made traffic access to the store much safer than it was in the past and the grass makes the store look nice. K. O'Toole noted that under previous permit review a charging station for electric cars was included. B. Brownlee noted that the charging station will not be pursued at this time, as it just doesn't make sense.

Kevin O'Toole moved and Ruth Stewart seconded to close the public hearing. motion passed 8-0.

Kevin O'Toole moved and Tuck Rawls seconded to approve the amended application for the expansion of a non-conforming structure, to eliminate the west and south entranes, add the

southeast access, and remove the planned charging station, and add grass to areas south and west of the store, motion passed 8-0.

1805 Route 30 Conditional Use - Changes to a pre-existing use/building - Vermont Country Store % Ryan Downey:

Ryan Downey introduced himself and explained that he would be presenting the project application as he is the co-applicant.

R. Downey noted that the project involves renovation of the current building at 1805 Route 30. Currently the building is home to: a 1 bedroom apartment, offices, a warehouse area, a textile manufacturing and retail area, and a storage shed. This project would involve: upgrading and expanding the existing apartment to 2 bedrooms, converting the warehouse space to a 2 bedroom apartment, keeping the offices, adding 5 public restrooms to the shed area, and turning the textile manufacturing/retail area into a marble museum and ice cream parlor. R. Downey presented the project site plan and answered questions about changes to the building including points of access etc. R. Downey noted that the public bathrooms would be available to anyone and that the existing septic system would likely be re-designed or replaced as needed based on the project. The addition of these restrooms would possibly allow the portable toilets stationed at the Quarry to be moved or removed. R. Downey also pointed out that he has reached out to the Agency of Transportation with regard to adding a crosswalk to the area in front of the building. He noted that currently with the summer use at the Quarry, cars park along Route 30 (west/south) of the Quarry and walk down and cross the road. Additionally visitors to the campground walk on this stretch of road to the Quarry. The project at 1805 Route 30 would also access/use the possible crosswalk for visitors to access the marble museum/ice cream parlor space.

Ruth Stewart asked about access to the existing apartment and the size of the apartment. R. Downey noted that there were currently two access points for the apartment and it is around 600 square feet, after the renovation it would be over 1,000 square feet and would retain two access points. Dave Wilson asked why Vermont Country Store would be renovating apartments, R. Downey explained that he would be the owner and that VCS is the co-applicant as the current owner under their agreement, but ownership would transfer and they would not be involved in the future operations. Vermont Country Store acquired the former Mountain Weavers property in 2019 and he has a purchase and sale agreement with VCS contingent upon getting permits necessary to operate. Ed Tanenhaus asked about any other State permits that might be required for the project. R. Downey responded that the Dept. of Health permits for prepared foods and Dept. of Fire Safety permits for changes to the building would be needed. John LaVecchia pointed out that the site plan and presentation were well done, but that he shared the concerns of the Planning Commission with regard to the access and crosswalk on Route 30. Discussion ensued about the crosswalk and getting additional information about the likelihood of the crosswalk being installed and what possible features it would include. R. Downey explained that he had already met with AOT and they had agreed to widen the shoulder of Route 30 during the pending paving, making walking along this stretch of Route 30 safer. He also noted

that Town was included in the process as they are looking at the Route 30 corridor more universally and would likely be pursuing speed limit changes and crosswalks in this location and other areas as well. Rob Gaiotti noted that the State would not grant the No Parking zone requested on the area south and west of the Quarry and that created or allowed for the current parking and pedestrian access to the Quarry. The Town will push AOT to follow through with the crosswalk because they created the situation, and that lowering the speed limit through this area all the way to the village will be looked at. Further discussion ensued about getting additional information related to the safety aspects of the crossing. Kevin O'Toole noted that he shared the same concern and worried about children who and Quarry visitors who would want to frequent the ice cream parlor and restrooms. K. O'Toole explained that the way he viewed the apartments, museum, restrooms, offices, were all permitted or conditional uses and were just fine. He added that the ice cream parlor possibly fell into the non-conforming use change and he would like to have additional information from the State about the crosswalk and safety measures. Discussion ensued about requiring or conditioning the permit based on the crosswalk. R. Downey noted that he would like the whole package approved, and did not think it was fair to require the permit to have a condition of a crosswalk that is clearly already needed based on current uses in the area. He noted that those accessing the Quarry, and campground already benefit from foot traffic and crossings. J. LaVecchia noted that the previous use was of lesser intensity so the changes to the proposed use would have to be considered carefully and that the safety issue seemed to be the biggest hurdle.

K. O'Toole inquired about recessing the meeting until the AOT comments or information was received on the site plan. R. Downey stated that he was OK with recessing. He then asked the board to review or comment/discuss any and all other features to the project at this meeting to save on time and repeated meetings etc. There were no additional questions. K. O'Toole restated that the main portions of the proposal and the site plan were well done and looked good, it was just these questions of whether or not the crosswalk would be included and when. He thanked Ryan Downey for a good presentation and well thought out proposal.

K. O'Toole moved and Tuck Rawls seconded to recess the hearing until the Agency of Transportation comments could be received on the site plan and reviewed by the Board. motions passed 8-0.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting stood adjourned at 8:18 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Rob Gaiotti
Town Manager