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Town of Colebrook
Planning and Zoning Commission
December 10, 2018 Colebrook Town Hall
6:30 pm Regular Meeting
Minutes

DEC 12 2018

COLEBROOKTOWN CLERK

Present: Regular members Vice Chair Jim Bickford, Ed Allen, Chuck Buchanan, Jim Millar, along with alternate's Marty Neal and Jane Vasaturo. Absent was Ed Lord. ZEO Michael Halloran sat at the table also.

Vice Chair Jim B., called the meeting to order at 6:30 and a quorum was established with Marty sitting for Ed L.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes from November 19, 2018 regular meeting were presented. Jim M. made a motion, seconded by Marty, to approve minutes. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Minutes from the November 26, 2018 special meeting were presented and Jim M. made a motion, seconded by Chuck to approve minutes. The vote to approve was unanimous.

New Business:

The Public Hearing for application, #18-020 from John Auclair, 204 Stillman Hill Rd. for a modification to a special exception for a farm brewery was opened. Sitting for the Hearing were Jim B., acting Chair, Jim M., Ed A., Chuck and Marty sitting for Ed L. Jim B. read the legal notice into the record and asked if anyone felt they should recuse themselves from the proceedings. Nobody did. All Certified mailing receipts were received and placed into the record.

Jim B. summarized the original approval including the nine conditions of approval dated 8/3/17. He also read in the 1-2 year farm plan as well as the 2-5 year anticipated plan, both from the original application. He then gave a brief run down of the proposed application, which include;

1. Allowing Food Trucks on site,
2. The ability to produce their own ciders and wines, as well as showcasing and offering ciders and wines from the region.
3. Expansion of their "Farm Store" and occasional large group functions.
4. Expansion of a kitchen.
5. Two additional buildings totaling over 4300 square ft.

6. The ability to close later on certain nights, (not specified) but no more than 15 nights per year.

John Auclair, the applicant spoke next and briefly described what Jim B. had touched on. John then turned the meeting over to Todd Parsons of Lenard Engineering. Todd went through and discussed his six page site plan including changes that had been done on site since the original approval and an explanation of why these changes were done. The site plan included the proposed additions with a total footprint of over 10,000 square feet on one floor.

The Commission was given the opportunity to ask questions next. Jim M. questioned the need for food at a tasting room. He also had concerns that a food truck could be considered a restaurant and that selling alcoholic beverages from another producer, would be a bar or tavern, which are not allowed in the residential zone as our regulations are currently written. Jim was also concerned if this even qualified as a farm yet with only Hops now just planted? John stated that Barley and Wheat will be planted going forward.

Chuck had concerns of how many food trucks were anticipated, John was uncertain he hadn't really investigated it enough yet. He did state that people bring their own food and their own wine and spirits because some people don't come to drink beer. Chuck stated that current regulations only allow the sale of alcoholic beverages that are produced on site. Chuck also wanted to confirm that seating capacity is currently for 100 people and the proposal is for requesting seating for 30 additional people now and 30 more at a later date. Also, as John described the doors being open on occasions would there be amplified sound from inside the building. Chuck also voiced concern over later hours as it is in a residential zone.

Marty wanted to know if the later hours and the food trucks would be on the weekends only, and wonder if there was enough business on the weeknights to have the hours and food trucks? John spoke about the state liquor commission and their lack of sufficient applications for farm breweries.

Jim Bickford had questions regarding the retail store and also others wines? These were not in the current regulations and this may be a gray area. Jim also asked if John anticipated outside tents for events, they were not part of the application. Jim suggested there should be more discussion, if changes were made to the regulations they would apply to the whole town, not just John. Jim M. agreed that the current regulations don't allow the Commission to approve some of what John is asking for and that changes may be needed

to the regulations. Jim B. also noted the email sent on 11/21 from John describing the changes made to the building.

Jane questioned the amount of liquor which could be served to customers if they were being served in different areas, and also if they were bringing in other alcohol, who was monitoring. If these are tasting rooms are there state regulations telling the server how much they can serve a customer?

Michael Halloran asked John how many Farm Breweries were in the state of Connecticut. John thought 3 or 4 including his own. Michael asked if food trucks were allowed at the other Farm Breweries? John did not know the answer. Michael also asked if the kitchen would be a commercial kitchen? Todd stated that it would not be commercial, it would only be used for a "warming kitchen" and would be licensed by FVHD.

There being no other questions from the Commission, Jim asked if there were questions from the audience.

George Neal from Shantry Rd. spoke first. He owns property near the farm and stated they are fine neighbors. He also said it is a good place to socialize with no rowdiness and he encouraged the board members to go visit. He also stated the Brewery could lower taxes and that Randy and John are above reproach. He also stated for the record, he is the husband of board member Marty Neal.

Ron Dorazio of Prock Hill Rd. thought it was a great spot and would like to see an outdoor grill there.

Sherri Gray of 23 Sandy Brook Rd. stated that she has been to many distilleries in MA and VT and NY and people travel all over to see these breweries. People are in awe of this facility. She stated that it is great beer and that is because they have great water. She also felt this was not a bar. She also knows that there are small amounts of spirits in a sample. Sherri also knows that you would need 3 food trucks for 200 people.

Chris Johnston of 7 Deer Hill Rd. spoke as a selectman and that he had gone to the Republican fundraiser and John and Randy are very generous. Currently the only facility to have functions is the senior center or Town Hall. He urged the zoning commission to make it work because you can see your neighbors there.

Tom Corvo from Fritz Rd. saw nothing detrimental to the town by having this, it would be a financial benefit. The folks that go there don't get intoxicated. He also wants the business to be successful.

Kim Sharnberg who lives directly across the street at 197 Stillman Hill Rd., spoke highly of John as being a great neighbor. He mentioned that John has agreed to adjust the lighting on the driveway and when it is on.

Kim also stated that he supports business but he is concerned about additional traffic and the concept of food trucks on the site. He purchased his home understanding that it was in a residential area and even though it is a state highway, the residential feel could disappear. He is very concerned that the Commission amend their regulations so early in the opening of this business, and also allowing a 60% increase in seating capacity and when would it stop? Kim questioned the amount of food trucks and John could not give an answer. As this is a farm, Kim would like to see an initial goal of farm products. He also voiced a concern of the uptick of cars now turning around in his driveway. The last concern Kim had was how was alcohol being regulated?

Steve Young from Colebrook Rd. has been to the Brewery and he has met people from town that he wouldn't have met otherwise. Steve stated that John has offered to hold meetings for the Lions Club so they don't have to go out of town. He suggested that the Commission approve or change regulations and he also thought it is a good idea to have food if you are going to be drinking alcohol.

Tom McKeon the first selectman from Sandy Brook Rd. stated that he has had no complaints in his office. He had personally spoken to John regarding the lights. Tom stated that when he has gone, he has met new people from town he didn't know before, and said that it is a great place to socialize.

Chris Johnston stated that John had run out of beer so that there is a need for him to expand.

Sherri Gray spoke again to the number of food trucks needed for groups of people. She also knows there is not a lot of odor from them because they make everything beforehand.

There were no correspondence and it was determined by the Commission to leave the Public Hearing opened until next month. The hearing will be continued to January 14, 2019.

Old Business;

There was a brief discussion regarding 337 Colebrook River Rd., Michael informed the Commission that the State did a site walk and it is not clear yet if they will make any additional changes. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

Everyone is in agreement with going forward with the Planimetrics contract, the Commission would like to hear from Dave Cusick on a few questions they have.

ZEO report:

See attached.

There was a brief discussion of 255 Smith Hill Rd.

There being no other business, a motion by Marty, seconded by Jim M., to adjourn the meeting was made. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Michael J. Halloran
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