

City of Ellsworth
Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 3, 2024 5:30 PM

Chair John DeLeo, Vice-Chair Rick Lyles, Secretary Nelson Geel, and Member Marc Rich attended the regular meeting of the Ellsworth Planning Board.

Four board members present

City Planner Matthew Williams and Assistant City Planner Elizabeth Ouellette.

Two staff members present

1.) Call to Order

Chair DeLeo called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM.

Call to Order

*Chair DeLeo asked if an agenda item could be added for the election of new officers. Vice-Chair Lyles moved to add an agenda item. Secretary Geel seconded the motion. **The vote to add an agenda item for the election of officers was UNANIMOUS (4-0).**

***Agenda Item Added**

2.) Adoption of Minutes from the December 6, 2023 Regular Meeting.

Vice-Chair Lyles moved to adopt the Minutes from the December 6, 2023 Regular Meeting. Member Rich seconded the motion. **The vote to adopt the Minutes from the December 6, 2023 Regular Meeting was UNANIMOUS (4-0).**

Adoption of minutes

ADOPTED

3.) Election of Officers

Vice-Chair Lyles nominated Chair DeLeo as Chairman. Member Rich seconded the motion. **The vote to elect Chair DeLeo for another term as Chairman was UNANIMOUS (4-0).**

Election of Officers

John DeLeo elected Chairman

Chair DeLeo nominated Vice-Chair Lyles as Vice-Chairman. Secretary Geel seconded the motion. **The vote to elect Vice-Chair Lyles for another term as Vice-Chairman was UNANIMOUS (4-0).**

Rick Lyles elected Vice-Chairman

Chair DeLeo nominated Secretary Geel as Secretary. Vice-Chair Lyles seconded the motion. **The vote to elect Secretary Geel for another term as Secretary was UNANIMOUS (4-0).**

Nelson Geel elected Secretary

4.) Motion to affirm that the City's Public Service Community Development Block Grant application was reviewed by the Planning Board and that the project proposed in the application conforms to the City's Comprehensive Plan and Chapter 56, the City's Land Use and Zoning Ordinances.

CDBG Grant Application

City Planner Williams began by explaining that this is a grant which the City applied for on behalf of Families First Community Center. He said that it would help fund an expansion of their services. He said that they would like to start a housing and heating fund as well as supplying unhoused individuals with basic necessities that they may not have when moving into permanent housing (pillows, blankets, etc.). He said that it is a federal grant which has

Introduction

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a requirement that the local planning board affirm that the project does not conflict with the Comprehensive Plan of the City's Land Use Ordinances. He said that this is because a lot of projects under this grant program involve construction of new buildings. This project does not involve that, but it is still a requirement. Williams then said that there is an environmental review in the packet materials which was affirmed by the Code Enforcement Office. Chair DeLeo asked about the phrasing of the motion. Williams said that it would be phrased the way that the agenda item is phrased. Williams said that the letter was not ready by the time that the packet was due to the members and asked if the Board would vote to accept the letter in the packet.

Member Rich moved to accept the letter into the packet materials. Vice-Chair Lyles seconded the motion. **The vote to accept the letter into the packet materials was UNANIMOUS (4-0).**

Letter accepted into Packet

Vice-Chair Lyles asked what the funds would be going towards. Williams pointed him to the budget which was included in the packet. He said that some of the funds would go towards purchasing materials and some would be going towards establishing funds to help more individuals. Lyles asked if there was any contact between the organization and the Housing Authority. Williams said that he was not sure. Secretary Geel asked who the applicant was for this grant. Williams said that the City was the applicant on behalf of the organization. Geel said that he would like to know more about the organization and would have liked to see a representative present. Williams said that all they were doing this evening was to affirm that the project plan does not conflict with the Comprehensive Plan or Land Use Ordinances. Williams also mentioned that there were four City Council meetings before this where representatives from the organization came and explained their new project. DeLeo asked if there could be any encouragement for landlords to accept Section 8 Housing Vouchers. Williams said that the organization may do that, but it would not be tied into the grant. Geel asked if there was any match component for the City. Williams said that there was not. Lyles asked if there really were low-income individuals who were involved in the making of this plan. Williams said that there was a committee which was partly made up of low-income individuals.

Discussion

Lyles moved to affirm that the City's Public Service Community Development Block Grant application was reviewed by the Planning Board and that the project proposed in the application conforms to the City's Comprehensive Plan and Chapter 56, the City's Land Use and Zoning Ordinances. Geel seconded the motion. **The motion to affirm that the City's Public Service Community Development Block Grant application was reviewed by the Planning Board and that the project proposed in the application conforms to the City's Comprehensive Plan and Chapter 56, the City's Land Use and Zoning Ordinances was UNANIMOUS (4-0).**

AFFIRMED

5.) Discussion and Action of Recommendation for New Members.

New Members

City Planner Williams said that both applicants were present this evening and they could give a brief introduction and questions one at a time. Vince Messer introduced himself and said that he was a fairly new resident to Ellsworth, he previously lived on MDI. He said

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that he was interested in Planning because he wants to see Ellsworth grow and grow well. He said that he believed that this Board is extremely important for this community. Vice-Chair Lyles asked what Messer would bring to the Planning Board. Messer said that he has a lot of experience being on Boards and he is familiar with how they operate. He said that he is currently on the Board at Healthy Acadia and MDI Hospital. He said that he also has experience with Boards in his career.

John Califano introduced himself and said that he was a surgeon in Ellsworth. He said that he was interested in the Planning Board because he is expanding his knowledge and his involvement in the community. He said that he has lived all over the country and has loved Ellsworth. He said that he wants to see the community grow and he has recently passed his Real Estate exam. He said that he sees the growth around the community and it is all very exciting. He said that he is very passionate about everything that he does and he is very motivated. He said that he would love to learn from the Board Members. Member Rich asked what Califano would have asked if he had been on the Board for the previous agenda item. He said that he would have agreed with a lot of the comments that the Board made and he would ask how it would benefit the community. He also said that he would want to ask how he could help the organization and how the community could be more involved. Lyles asked Califano what he thought he could bring to the Board. Califano said that he would bring his passion for results and motivation to the Board. He said that he is the busiest surgeon in the region and he always gives all of his energy to a project when he takes it on. He said that growth requires energy and motivation.

Lyles said that there is also room for engagement in the Comprehensive Plan which they are welcome to attend in their capacity as members of the public. Lyles said that the Planning Board would have some involvement in the Plan as well. Messer said that he had already attended a subcommittee meeting for the Comprehensive Plan. He asked if his involvement in the Planning Board would preclude him from attending more meetings. Williams said that he could attend the meetings in his capacity as a member of the public, but he could not attend in his capacity as a Planning Board Member.

Chair DeLeo opened the public hearing at 5:59PM. There were no members of the public in attendance. DeLeo closed the public hearing at 5:59PM.

**Public Hearing
Opened and Closed**

Vice-Chair Lyles moved to recommend Vince Messer and John Califano to City Council as Alternate Members of the Planning Board and to elevate Mike Hangge to a full voting member. Member Rich seconded the motion. **The motion to recommend Vince Messer and John Califano to City Council as Alternate Members of the Planning Board and to elevate Mike Hangge to a full Voting Member was UNANIMOUS (4-0).**

RECOMMENDED

Williams then went on to talk about the process going forward. He said that the City Council would vote to appoint the members in their February meeting. He said that the members would be able to attend the February meeting, but they would not be able to officially sit on the Board. He said that they would be able to sit on the Board at the March meeting. Lyles asked if there would be any training. Williams said that there are a lot of

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training sessions for Planning Board members, but they should not give the members that training until they are appointed as members.

6.) Discussion on 2024 Planning Board Schedule

2024 Planning Board Schedule

City Planner Williams explained that the 2024 schedule was included in their packets. He asked the Board to look through and see if there are any dates that would be in conflict. He said that a vote would not be needed, but would like a review before it was finalized. The Board could not see any dates that they thought would be in conflict. Williams noted that the January 2025 meeting would be on a Thursday since City Hall would be closed on the usual date. The Board was okay with the schedule. Williams said that they would get the schedule posted to the public.

7.) Discussion on Ordinance Prioritization for the Upcoming Fiscal Year

Upcoming Fiscal Year Priorities

City Planner Williams said that he is working through his budget at present and would like to know how many public mailings would be needed throughout the fiscal year. He said that he would like to update the subdivision ordinance as well as tighten up some of the definitions in Article 14. He said that there may also be updates to the Table of Uses, however he said that he thought it should wait until after the Comprehensive Plan is finished. He then said that he would like to look into creating a Planning Board Manual where some of the procedural requirements exist. He said that it would allow the Board to amend their procedures without having to do a city-wide mailing which is expensive. He said that the actual substantive requirements would stay in the ordinance. Chair DeLeo asked if the mailings were an ordinance requirement or a State requirement. Williams said that there are some State requirements which they must follow, but there are other portions where it is required only by City Ordinance. DeLeo asked if there would be a smaller committee to work on these changes. Williams said they could if they wanted, but he believed that the Board was small enough as it is to be able to go over changes in an efficient way. He said that if the Board would want to use a committee, that committee would have to give all of the information to the full Board. Vice-Chair Lyles suggested that the Board bring all of the changes to the City Council in one meeting so it would limit the amount of mailings and procedural work. Williams said that was something that they could do if the Board wanted. DeLeo said that he would like to see a requirement for an exterior architecture plan so they can see what the project will look like. He said that he didn't want a design review, but he would be interested in seeing what it will look like when reviewing the plan. Lyles said that the Board can go through the ordinances and let Staff know what their priorities via email. Williams said that they could do that, but asked that the full Board be included on all emails to avoid duplication. He said that the list would be made public at the next meeting. Secretary Geel said that he would like a requirement for satellite imagery in all submissions. Lyles agreed with Geel's suggestion, as long as the cost to the developers would not be too high. Williams asked that the Board send him the suggestions in the next two weeks so he can work on the Planning budget. Lyles asked how this would impact the budget. Williams said that it would impact how many workshops, public notices, and potentially mailings they would need to include in the budget.

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8.) Staff Comments

Staff Comments

Chair DeLeo asked City Planner Williams if he could elaborate on the project going into Beals Avenue. Williams said that it was a housing project which will be coming to the Planning Board in the coming months. He said that it would be an affordable subdivision at the end of Beals Avenue. Williams said that he has a copy of the Stormwater Application to the DEP in the Planning Office for review. Vice-Chair Lyles asked about the potential closure of one of the ends of Beals Ave as part of the Trail project. Williams said that it is still the intention to close that portion. Williams also said that the developer is operating under the assumption that the road would be closed. Lyles said that would be necessary if a large housing development would be going in. Lyles asked when the closure would be finalized. Williams said that the feasibility engineering is taking place now, but he did not know the timeframe. He did say that there would be public meetings about the closure. Williams said that they are working on their State permits first before they come to Planning Board. He said that he was unsure about which meeting they would be presenting to the Board.

DeLeo asked if Williams has heard about any other housing projects. He said that there was a project that was presented as Preliminary, but he was unsure about when they were coming back. He said that there was another project which would be coming to the Board soon.

Williams announced that Deputy Code Enforcement Officer Roberts has returned and therefore the Code Enforcement Office is now fully staffed.

9.) Adjournment

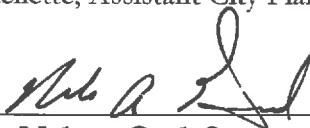
Vice-Chair Lyles moved to adjourn. Secretary Geel seconded the motion. The vote to adjourn was UNANIMOUS (4-0).

Vote to adjourn at
6:21 PM

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Ouellette, Assistant City Planner.

Agendas and minutes posted on the City of Ellsworth's website: ellsworthmaine.gov A video transcript of this meeting is also available on YouTube.

2/7/24
Date


Nelson Geel, Secretary
Ellsworth Planning Board

