

Online – Zoom

Commissioners Present: Trip Barnes, Christina Brown, Rob Doyle, Jim Joyce, Joan Malkin, Kathy Newman, Ben Robinson, Doug Sederholm, Christine Todd, Richard Toole, Jim Vercruyse, Linda Sibley

Staff Present: Alex Elvin, Mike Mauro, Lucy Morrison, Adam Turner, Bill Veno, Dan Doyle, Christine Flynn

Richard Toole opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. and Adam Turner took attendance.

1. HOB KNOB INN EXPANSION (DRI 697) POST-PUBLIC HEARING REVIEW

Present for the applicant: Patrick Ahearn, William Booth, Diane Carr, Sean Murphy

Alex Elvin presented an overview of the project, including additions to the public record, maps of surrounding land uses, and offers submitted by the applicant on Nov. 13, including as they relate to the DRI Housing Policy. In addition to the offer of 4 basement rooms for up to 8 employees and one year-round unit to be obtained offsite for an anticipated year-round employee, the applicant offered to provide a common area for the basement rooms. MVC staff recommended an additional 3-6 rooms (on or off-site) for staff housing, along with annual compliance review.

In regard to the proposed offsite employee housing, Joan Malkin asked the applicant to explain what is meant by market rate, since the applicant has stated the inn would cover any cost above market rate. She suggested presenting a formula for what that means in context.

Richard Toole asked how the basement rooms would be filled, and Sean Murphy replied that they would be reserved for employees. He said if fewer than 8 employees desired the rooms, then the remaining spots would probably stay vacant.

Alex Elvin presented staff notes in the form of the benefits and detriments table, and commissioners discussed each item in the table.

Christina Brown noted that although there are other commercial or mixed uses in the R5 district, they all have a residential appearance. Many of the business structures in the area were in fact private homes in the past.

Linda Sibley argued that the proposal was a significant increase in intensity of use on a site that currently has housing and office space; and that if the town wanted to encourage commercial uses in that area, they should change the zoning. Richard Toole argued that the proposed architecture for 124 Upper Main would be an improvement over the existing conditions.

Joan Malkin noted the proposed loss of open space at 124 Upper Main. She also pointed out that commercial uses were allowed in the R5 district by special permit, and that both the town ZBA and Historic District Commission would review the project.

Sean Murphy confirmed that there would not be a manager living on the property, and inn owner Diane Carr added that she lives less than a mile from the inn and could respond in person if a guest needed to speak with a manager. She said her number is posted in the guest rooms.

Kathy Newman asked who would monitor areas such as the proposed pool. Diane Carr said that none of the employees spend the night, but reiterated that if there were a complaint she could be there quickly. She said there was a manager-on-duty system that she shares with the current manager in order to provide coverage 24/7. In response to further questioning, Sean Murphy said that in his experience, larger inns have a night auditor, but no manager on duty. The manager's hours at the Hob Knob during the season vary between 6AM to 11PM. Sean added that the pool would be closed and covered at 8PM, before the manager leaves the property.

Conversation returned to the topic of offsite housing, with Sean Murphy explaining that the intent was to replace the year-round tenant presently renting from Skip Tomassian at 124 Upper Main; the hotel would find another year-round unit or house for a new anticipated year-round employee, and the employee would pay fair rent. Christina Brown suggested that the offer state that if the housing is not filled by an employee, then it must be filled by someone else. She also pointed out that the inn is currently not in compliance with a ZBA condition requiring onsite housing for the inn manager.

Joan Malkin proposed a condition to prohibit music on the property in general, and to require an onsite manager to be present through the time the pool closes. Doug Sederholm suggested eliminating the pool from the proposal all together. Trip Barnes argued that the high cost of staying at the Hob Knob would imply that guests are not the rowdy type, and he pointed out that employees could still step in where necessary.

Joan Malkin suggested working with the town on pedestrian crosswalks on Tilton Way, and Ben Robinson requested a more detailed sketch of the employee common area in the basement.

In regard to the staff notes, commissioners said they would prefer the full commission to decide on what should be considered a benefit or a detriment, rather than just the LUPC. It was agreed that staff notes should not assign benefits and detriments to any aspect of the proposal, but simply present notes for commissioners to discuss at LUPC, after which staff would complete the full benefits and detriments table for the commission. Commissioners agreed they should have another LUPC meeting on the Hob Knob prior to deliberation.

Richard Toole adjourned the meeting at 6:52PM.