

Royalton Planning Commission

APPROVED – Minutes

Monday, April 11, 2011

Members Attending: Beguin, Brandau, Gravel, Levasseur

Guests Attending: Mark Thibeault (RE: Dollar General), Matt Casey (RE: Dollar General), Andy Hoak (Ruggiano Engineering), W.R. McCullough, Clarence J. Sanders, Judith Sanders, Bea McCullough, Joan Goldstein, Larry Trottier, Phil Gates, Christian Petrangelo (Note Taker)

Meeting came to order at 7:05 PM.

1. Matt Casey, Mark Thibeault, and Andy Hoak – Dollar General (“DG”)

- Levasseur stated that DG’s proposed project is sited for Route 107 between Dead River Propane and CVPS.
- Casey discussed basic plans for Dollar General’s (“DG’s”) new store. Casey, Thibeault, and Hoak are here for DG’s due diligence and to receive site design input and other recommendations. Access includes a shared driveway. Building, parking lot, and septic system are designed to face Route 107. DG considered alternative designs, but rear lot area’s geography prohibits placing a parking lot and septic system there. Deliveries would still take place behind the building. To ameliorate potential aesthetic issues, hedgerows or other vegetation could shield parking lot from Route 107. DG’s sign would be externally illuminated. The building itself is modeled after a Vermont-style structure in Williamstown.
- Levasseur inquired why DG chose Royalton for the store’s location.
 - Casey responded that DG conducted market research that found Royalton to be a good market area.
- Levasseur asked what kinds of goods DG sells.
 - Casey responded that DG is a general store, not a “dollar store” as one would understand the phrase.
- Gravel inquired whether DG’s market would conflict with Welch’s.
 - Casey answered that DG is not a hardware store.
 - Thibeault added that DG’s slogan is “today’s country store,” like a modernized “five and dime.”
- Levasseur inquired about the location of DG’s closest present store.
 - Thibeault answered Randolph.
- Casey clarified that this would be a corporately-owned store.
 - Goldstein asked whether that would be a departure from past practice.
 - Casey said yes since stores are usually leased.
- Beguin asked how the store would compare to Ames.

- Thibeault answered that the stores are similar, but Ames is 5 to 6 times bigger than DG.
- Larry asked if DG would sell a variety of food.
 - Thibeault answered that DG focuses on frozen foods, milk, butter, etc., not on fresh foods.
 - Brandau reflected that, in that case, it would not just be “convenience store” food (e.g., chips, candy, and ice cream).
 - Casey & Thibeault confirmed this.
- Levasseur asked how big the store would be.
 - Casey responded about 9000 square feet: 70 ft. x 130 ft.
- Brandau inquired about dimensions: frontage and depth of lot.
 - Hoak responded 230 ft. frontage & 440 ft. deep, approximately 2 acres.
- Beguin asked McCullough whether, in his opinion, a Dollar General would compete directly with other businesses off Route 107.
 - McCullough responded that he was not concerned about this and that some healthy competition is a good thing.
- Levasseur emphasized that the Town Plan does not encourage “big box” stores. On the other hand, the proposed location would probably be the “right area,” if any, to have such a store. But it would be better to locate the parking lot behind the building.
 - Hoak elaborated on the parking lot point. Due to the geography of the property’s back end, a septic system could not be placed there, so it must go in front. If the parking lot is subsequently moved, there are other issues. A septic system need only be 10 feet from a parking lot, but it must be 35 feet from a building. If the septic system were moved, the parking lot would be pushed into a gravel extraction area.
- Brandau asked if DG has experience with Act 250.
 - Casey and Thibeault answered yes—DG has a lot of experience.
- Brandau expressed his concern about potential access issues. What does DG anticipate for traffic?
 - Casey answered that these stores are generally not huge traffic-generators. They usually pick up people who are already shopping in the area.
- Trottier inquired about employment prospects at DG.
 - Casey answered 15–20 employees, fluctuating seasonally, with some part-time and some full-time. Operating hours would be around 8:30/9am to 9pm, 7 days a week, with different weekend hours.
 - Brandau inquired about DG’s wage structure.
 - Casey & Thibeault were unsure.
 - Trottier expressed his concern about the salary levels.
 - Brandau emphasized the importance of a living wage.
 - Casey offered to contact DG to get more information on this.
- Brandau said that the Town Plan discourages retail developments in this area. Has DG read about this?
 - Hoak answered that they have read the section about future development in the Exit 3 exchange area. He thinks that DG fits the “low density development” criteria. His reading of “unless subordinate to a service or

- office use” suggests that the Town Plan only discourages *multiple* retail establishments, e.g., strip malls and plazas.
- Brandau responded that the Town Plan discourages retail development that conflicts with commercial enterprises located in the main villages.
 - Casey commented that, after driving through Royalton, he thinks this type of retail would be welcome in the area.
- Trottier asked whether the Randolph store is a good example of what to expect from the Royalton store.
 - Thibeault responded yes.
 - Trottier inquired about the location of DG’s headquarters.
 - Casey responded outside Nashville.
 - Levasseur reflected that this project then is not a *huge* box store, i.e. on a Wal-Mart scale. But will this trend remain? Does DG anticipate future expansion?
 - Casey responded that this store is smaller than those DG had planned for Vermont initially.
 - Levasseur inquired whether DG reduced the size for the Vermont market.
 - Casey answered that merchandising likely led to size reduction. Retailers would prefer to build smaller.
 - Brandau inquired about building materials.
 - Casey responded that there would be a metal-seamed roof.
 - Brandau asked whether it would be a pre-fabricated model.
 - Casey answered no. Plans are based off a Vermont-style model in Williamstown. Interior security lighting and parking lot lighting (both with shields) will be at a minimum. Store will stay dimly lit for safety.
 - Brandau inquired about fire sprinklers.
 - Casey responded that sprinklers are not currently in the plan because the building is steel. Sprinklers will be installed if so required after inspection / under relevant law.
 - Hoak added that the CV facility has a storage tank for sprinklers.
 - Levasseur reiterated that RPC would like to see more done about the parking lot.
 - Casey inquired whether the use itself is permissible for that area.
 - Brandau, Levasseur, & Beguin responded that that issue is debatable.
 - Casey asked what the next step would be in this process. He expressed concern about DG spending more money on Act 250 and other requirements if the town plans to oppose development.
 - Brandau recommended that, since the project implicates a regional interchange, DG contact the regional planning commission.
 - Hoak added that Criteria 10 of Act 250 asks prospective developers to consider local and regional plans, so DG heed this.
 - Levasseur said that RPC would look at whether the project is consistent with the Town Plan by balancing various factors and looking at prior decisions. RPC members would like a chance to discuss this issue amongst themselves and to speak with the Select Board.

- Levasseur added that she would like to know if the driveway would still be valid per the State.
 - Brandau wanted to know more about the impact of development on the road.
 - Goldstein asked what the timeline would be.
 - Beguin asserted that RPC can discuss it tonight and vote on it at the next meeting.
 - Casey explained that he has a scheduling conflict with the next meeting and would like to be here to field any questions.
 - Brandau suggested addressing the issue instead at the Select Board meeting on the next evening (Tuesday).
 - Casey agreed that this would work.
- Levasseur thanked the guests for attending the meeting.

****All Guests except for Trottier, Gates, & Petrangelo departed.**

- Beguin expressed her concern that the retail development “doesn’t really fit” with the area.
 - Brandau added that DG is essentially a “mini-super store” that sells goods but does not provide any services.
- Levasseur commented that chains like DG are often transient.
- Beguin said that DG is a rising national corporation in competition with Family Dollar.
 - Levasseur said that there is already one very close—in Randolph.
 - Gates said that places like DG will sell what they can buy cheap in bulk. Wages will be like Wal-Mart: Minimum wage for high schoolers and maybe \$10–11 for adults, with no benefits.
 - Beguin expressed her concern about impacts on local businesses.
 - Levasseur offered that there is no place to buy clothes around here; perhaps DG could fill that gap.
 - Beguin responded that DG does not focus on selling clothes. At least Ames had clothes for low-income families. She would be much more interested if DG had a big bargain-clothing section. Could the town get them to cater more toward the community?
 - Brandau responded that chains like DG would be unlikely to change their policies to meet local demands.
- Gates commented that the proposed project area is mixed-use, and that DG may just be trying to tie the project into the whole scheme. While the current parking lot orientation does not work, moving it may cut off road visibility. However, because of development, the town will see added pressure on Route 107. This could lead to even more development.
- Gravel asked how DG would benefit the town.
 - Brandau responded that potentially in jobs and taxes.
- Brandau said that he now would like to consult the Town Plan, Two Rivers, and VTrans.
 - Beguin added that someone should visit the Randolph store.

2. Minutes of March 14, 2011

- Brandau moved to approve the minutes. Beguin seconded. All in favor. Motion carries.

3. Appointments

- Levasseur said RPC needs volunteers to interview prospective RPC members.
 - Kyle Zenlea has expressed interest in RPC membership.
 - Levasseur will also speak to Boles about his attendance record.
 - Beguin emphasized the importance of finding members who would attend regularly to avoid quorum problems.

4. Deer Yard Maps

- Beguin said that the Town Plan map is 10 years out-of-date, but people still reference it.
 - Levasseur said that she has a list of names from Two Rivers. She will write for a copy of the Royalton Area Map to see if it is accurate.
 - Beguin said that if the map is accurate it should be added as a supplement to the Town Plan.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT:

Levasseur moved to adjourn. Beguin seconded. All in favor. Motion carries.

Meeting ended at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christian Petrangelo
christian.petrangelo@gmail.com