NEWPORT CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES *OCTOBER 22, 2013*

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Elliott, Clark Curtis, Jennifer Black, Ruth Sproull, Woodman Page

MEMBERS ABSENT: NONE

OTHERS PRESENT: PAUL DREHER, ZA; Joe Gresser, Pam Ladds, Anne Chiarello, Jay Ancel, Chris Roy, Robin Smith, Bill Stenger, Sharon Howe, Diane Peel, Rick Desrochers, Neil Morrissette, Patricia Sears, Corey Therrien, Alex McLean, John Wilson, Janis Wilson, Denis Chenette, Bill Kelly, Brian McNeal

7:07 p.m. Chair Charles Elliott called the meeting to order. Clark Curtis moved to approve the minutes of the 10.8.13 with changes to two spelling errors. Ruth Sproull brought up some wording changes: under 7:16 pm, change the sentence to read: "The concern of some members of the Commission thus far is that the state is not offering assistance with security…" Clark Curtis amended his motion to include those changes. Ruth Sproull seconded the motion. Woodman Page abstained from the vote. **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.**

7:11 p.m. UPDATES ON DEVELOPMENT WITH BILL STENGER. Bill had asked to present to the Commission after it had come to his attention that there were letters circulating in town that he would be able to circumvent the municipal approval process and permitting; this is not the case. It was also implied that he would be able to circumvent the Act 250 process; this is also incorrect. His intent is to update the Commission and the community on each of the projects.

AnCBio: They are working with NNE Pharmaplan on the project. The project will be 70,000 sq. ft and 4 stories when completed. The original plans for what will take place in the building have not changed; research/development and manufacturing. They are planning to be ready to begin construction next summer and are entering the permitting and building process now. They are planning to come before the DRB around the beginning of 2014, then will go before Act 250. All projects will have to meet the ten criteria for Act 250. They feel they are on track with the process, with a possible slight delay for weather, but still comfortable. The presented drawings are very cursory. Two individuals have joined the project; Dr. Ike Lee and Dr. Jake Lee (a professor in Michigan who will be moving to Burlington to join UVM faculty to begin work in preparation for this facility). They have also bought the house on Lake Road and have put large amounts of money into restoration of the house, which will be used by visiting professors, etc. Clark Curtis asked if Mr. Stenger saw any potential problems with the bylaw; he did not. The ZA replied that the Pharma Group has called regularly to check in and ask questions related to the bylaw. Clark Curtis asked about the estimated construction cost; Mr. Stenger was not willing to release too many numbers as they are putting it out for bid now, but typically construction for these facilities is around $500/sq. ft. Chris Roy asked if Mr. Stenger would give a brief outline of what will take place in the building. Bill Kelley outlined four products: a new heart/lung machine (human organ-type pump), dialysis machine that will allow for more mobile use

than what is currently available, stem cell related products (not embryonic stem cells. These are mature stem cells already designed to be something. Technology coming here is focused on stem cell factoring), and organic replacement liver technology. A great deal will be manufacturing and assembly, as well as research and development, and clean rooms. Ruth Sproull asked if FDA approval would be necessary; yes, it is. They have some approvals already and are working through the process for the rest. Ruth Sproull then asked how the funding for the project was progressing. Mr. Stenger replied that they are at about 80% funding for this particular project, with further trips abroad planned. Corey Therrien asked about the clean rooms and if there would be limits to their uses through rental and lease agreement; yes, there would be. Mr. Kelley explained that the uses will be vetted by project management, with limitations on what research can take place there. Mr. Stenger replied that there is a need for affordable facilities such as this one for smaller biotech companies, and they will not allow anything that will be a threat to the community. The Commission and those present discussed Newport's general location and job availability. Clark Curtis asked if they had estimated employment numbers; Mr. Stenger is estimating about 500 employees, about 40% local with another 25% Vermonters. They are working with educational providers across the state to develop related programs. Diane Peel asked about the potential for competition; Mr. Stenger replied that they have researched and vetted the location and the products thoroughly are confident in moving forward. Neil Morrissette commented that he works closely with area businesses on workforce development and receives several calls a week about potential job opportunities with the company and welcomes them to the area.

Renaissance Block: They have signed a sales agreement with Doug Spates and have put down a significant nonrefundable payment. They are moving forward aggressively with design and layout. Jay Ancel and Rick Burroughs with Black River Design are also present. They expect to tear down the current building in the spring with construction underway by summer of 2014. They will be constructing from the rear to avoid disruption of downtown area. There will be some, of course, but they are working to minimize it. They are planning a 2 story brewpub, substantial parking under the building, and retail and commercial space on the first floor on Main and Coventry. The upper levels will be operated as a extended stay hotel facility but may also be available for shorter stays in conjunction with the waterfront hotel. There will also be 2 restaurants on the main floor, and as many as 4 retail operations. The parking underneath as well as outdoor will add 111 spaces total. The building will be six stories total, five above ground. The Commission and those present discussed the current building facades and the role of FBC in retaining the downtown character, as well as the addition of high quality jobs, spinoff jobs, and a significant increase in the city's tax base.

Marina waterfront hotel: They are very aware of important businesses to the area currently located there: Vista, Rite-Aid, Hoagies, etc. They are working with Greg Bliss of Hoagies to keep the restaurant there and not lose stride during construction. The project will connect via the Causeway. There is a walkway at the front along the lake, connecting from the downtown waterfront to the East Side that will be publically accessible. The building has a very interesting design, with lots of windows and air. There will also be underground parking, and a large increase in green space that will be publically accessible and much

better than the current impervious surface parking lot. They have also set aside square footage for a two screen state-of-the-art movie theater, arcade and eight lane bowling alley (which will depend on market research), and retail space. There will be a hotel, conference center, minimum of 4 restaurants, and hidden parking, with additional facilities overlooking the lake. This will be operated and marketed together with the Renaissance block facility, in conjunction with Jay Peak. There will also be an ag emphasis, with a stadium kitchen to showcase VT ag products. Because of existing leases in the plaza, construction will be later, as well as wanting to avoid disruption to the city. They are looking at moving Ride-Aid and Vista.

8:05 p.m. OTHER BUSINESS. Ruth Sproull asked about and email from Trish Sears of Newport City Renaissance Corp regarding the city plan and the designated downtown status; the ZA checked into the issue and the City Plan will need to be adopted by the end of 2015 to keep Designated Downtown status. Ruth Sproull requested that the Commission address clarification of the bylaw on the role of the DRB, especially relating to waivers. Also, in the nonconformity section, she does not understand section E and would like to eliminate or clarify it. The Commission discussed further potential bylaw amendments, clarifications and changes to consider in the future. They are looking to tear down the plaza in the first quarter of 2016, with 24 months for constructions, to open in 2017. There will also be a floating marina similar to the East Side, removed in winter. There was further discussion about the addition of the projects to the community; this will be marketed heavily in conjunction with Jay Peak, but locals are needed as much as tourists and will be welcomed and planned for in all the projects.

8:26 p.m. BYLAW CHANGES. Medical marijuana dispensaries discussion: the Commission discussed the task we were asked to do, which was to write language banning the dispensaries, but if we also sent a recommendation that we don't agree with the language, based on public input. Clark Curtis noted that he was interested in hearing from the Council; Denis Chenett that they were asking for language to ban the dispensaries in the city. Mr. Curtis asked if any of the council had read the state statute concerning medical marijuana; Mr. Chenette replied that he had not and could not speak for the others. Mr. Curtis then explained the process for bylaw changes. Woodman Page noted that he did not agree that we should send the language to the council with any sort of recommendation one way or the other. Mr. Elliott noted that because of the public hearing process, the Commission should pass the public comments we received to the Council. Ruth Sproull made a motion to forward the proposed bylaw changes to the Newport City Council as written in Section 439 #1 to add language to prohibit medical marijuana dispensaries as permitted and defined by 18 VSA Chapter 86 and regulated by the VT Dept. of Public Safety, with the Planning Commission's recommendation not to implement based upon public hearing input and a review of the regulation per 18 VSA Chapter 86. Jennifer Black seconded the motion. Clark Curtis asked for clarification and there was further discussion. Ruth Sproull, Clark Curtis and Jennifer Black voted yes, as well as Chair Charles Elliott. Woodman Page voted no, with the noted clarification that he was for the motion going forward, but opposed to the recommendation from the Commission.

8:50 p.m. OTHER BYLAW CHANGES. Ruth Sproull had asked the ZA to make copies of items for the Commission to discuss at a later date, including nonconforming structures. The Commission discussed this subject length, as well as grandfathering, combination of lots, and what could be learned from the Maplefield's proposal and permitting process. The Commission will discuss at a later date.

9:11 NEW BUSINESS. Patricia Sears asked for clarification on her responsibility as the Designated Downtown organization to clarify the need for the city plan updates to maintain VT Designated Downtown status. The ZA had spoken with NVDA for clarification and received word that the Commission needed to update the plan at the end of 2014, but not sooner. Patricia asked for this to be put into writing and sent to her. Jennifer Black will also send her the link to the City Plan Google docs for input on the downtown section.

9:13 p.m. NEXT MEETING. The next meeting will be November 5, 2013, at 7 pm in the City Council Room. A Historic Preservation Commission meeting will be set at that meeting.

9:13 p.m. Clark Curtis made a motion to adjourn. This was seconded by Woodman Page. **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.**

Minutes taken and transcribed by Jennifer Black.