

**BETHLEHEM PLANNING BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
August 12, 2015  
BETHLEHEM TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM**

Present: Mike Bruno, Chris McGrath, Andrea Bryant, Marie Stevenson, Steve Gorman, Sandy Laleme, Jeanne Robillard, and Don Lavoie.

Excused: Dave Wiley

**Site Visit:** The board met at the James Street entrance to the proposed Lloyd's Hills Community Living site with AHEAD members Mike Clafin, Olivia Bealeau, Nick Fiore and Gene Gridwood at 5:00. Olivia disburses handouts to all the attendees. Mike Bruno informs the public this is an information only meeting and the findings will be discussed at the public hearing to follow at 6:30. The board moves into the wooded area to the point where the buildings will begin. A discussion about the location of the solar array takes place it is noted the land is wet, and has a steep grade. The board exits the wooded area and closes the meeting at 5:30

**Robie Lot Line Adjustment Public Meeting:**

Mike opens the public hearing at 6:30 and reads the public hearing notice. He appoints Jeanne as a full member for Dave Wiley. Steve Gorman asks to recuse himself due to financial interest in the project. The board reviews the checklist. Don Lavoie arrives at 6:35 and Mike appoints him as a full member for Steve Gorman.

**Motion made by Chris McGrath, seconded by Andrea Bryant, to accept the application for Lot Line Adjustment as complete. All members vote in favor.**

Gardner Kellogg presents the plans for the Lot Line Adjustment to the board.

**Motion made by Andrea Bryant, seconded by Chris McGrath to approve the request for Lot Line Adjustment for John and Janice Robie. All members vote in favor, motion carries.**

**Lloyd's Hill Community Living Public Hearing:**

Mike Bruno reads the public hearing notice for Lloyd's Hill Community Living's Site Plan Review Application and opens the meeting at 6:40.

Don Lavoie steps down as full member and Steve Gorman returns.

The board reviews the checklist and has questions regarding DES applications. Nick Fiore informs the board they haven't filed for permits yet and suggests it be a condition of approval. The board inquires

about garbage storage. Olivia Bealeu informs the board that AHEAD will hire a service for curb side pick-up for all the residents. The board questions the water and sewer permits. Olivia informs the board she met with the Village District last night and they have confirmed they will provide service. The lighting plan comes into question; Nick Fiore confirms the lights will meet the dark sky ordinance. Other points discussed include signage, there is none; landscaping, buffers will be put into place after clearing; snow storage, against the road; WSPCD (Water Supply and Pollution Control Division) permits DOT permits, DES permits, pending; Water permit and fees, \$1200 per connection; town road approvals, met with Brett Jackson earlier in the day, he is concerned that Noyes Street can't handle any more water and would like to see a bond for both Turner and Noyes Streets, along with a construction easement for 302; DES Alteration of Terrain storm water runoff/environmental impact statement.

The board feels the application meets the requirements except for listing Mt View Lane on the plans and having permits in place for DES, DOT and the town precinct.

**Motion made by Steve Gorman, seconded Marie Stevenson to accept the application as complete pending the required permits. All members vote in favor, the Site Plan Review application for Lloyd's Hills Community Living is conditionally accepted as complete.**

Mike Bruno invites the members of AHEAD to present their plan. He then explains to the public how the process works and asks all members of the public to address their questions directly to him and to state their name clearly for the records.

Mike Claflin and Olivia Bealeu give a presentation covering the scope of the project. Mike Bruno opens the floor to Planning Board members.

Andrea would like AHEAD to look more closely at snow removal and how it impacts the wetlands. Nick Fiore offers that most of that would be directed into the containment areas. Jeanne would like a further explanation about storm water runoff; Sandy interjects questioning what the drainage patterns are currently. Nick refers to the Site Plan and shows where culverts will be in place to contain the stream of runoff and also confirms containment areas will be in place. Mike questions whether pushing the snow in these directions will be detrimental. Nick states the detention areas are also a treatment area, that's their point. Andrea wonders about the snow from the top of the buildings. Nick assures the board this would be dealt with.

Mike Bruno would like to know more about the traffic study. When was it done, and in what location? David Wood states the study was done in 2009 by Fernoff Company for the country phase of AHEAD's Town and Country project, which consisted of 36 units located on Mann's Hill in Littleton. The study was done on traffic going in and out of the 36 units. Mike wonders what the number of houses is on Mann's Hill verses James Street and feels the Site Plan makes a lot of assumptions. He questions whether or not the board needs something more current. Nick states there was a more current study done and uses a formula to generate the numbers and there was no change. Mike feels this plan is the best case scenario, and wonders what the worst case scenario would be; is the data presented valid? Nick offers

that there are a lot of variables like times people leave for work, what distance they live from work and what shift they work. Chris McGrath points out that during the conceptual the access point was Rte 302, but the Site Plan indicated James Street and questions the change. Olivia states that after meeting with Brett Jackson and Jack Anderson they understand they will have to put in some sort of temporary road for construction access, which then can be maintained as an emergency access to the property, perhaps gated. Jeanne offers she felt more comfortable with 2 access roads, like presented at the conceptual and she is concerned about increased traffic on James Street in its current condition, and wonders if the width of the current road is large enough. Tinker adds that her personal observation is that parents are bringing their kids to school from this neighborhood and are in and out during the morning and afternoon hours. She also comments that there are no sidewalks. Dawn interjects that Dave Wiley and Jack Anderson have suggested that sidewalks be added to James Street, and that Planning Board secure a bond for both James and Turner Streets.

Mike Bruno inquires why there was a change of access roads from the conceptual plan to the site plan presented this evening. Mike Claflin explains that the original plan included more senior housing which was going more accessible from the Rte 302 entrance, but that phase has been eliminated due to DES permitting. AHEAD had to scale the project down in size and felt the road from Rte 302 disturbs a lot of wetlands and they are trying to minimize the wetlands impact. Mike Bruno asks how the temporary road affects the wetlands. Nick states a temporary road does not have a permanent impact. It will be gated for emergency access. Chris feels if they are already building a road they might as well make it permanent. Nick points out that the materials for a temporary road cost far less.

Andrea would like to know more about the water and sewer access. Nick states the water lines will come through James Street and loop to Main Street. Olivia tells the board this was a requirement of the BVD to help improve the water pressure in the James Street neighborhood.

Steve Gorman asks what the cost would be to build a temporary road plus the sidewalks, verses the access through 302. Nick's best guess is \$100 a foot and the potential length is somewhere around 1,650 feet. Steve would also like to know how AHEAD arrived at the number of 25 children, and what the formula is for how many are in the community already, and how many are anticipated to move in. Mike Claflin explains the number was arrived at based on past data from other projects. The average number of children is one per unit. As for the statistics for students already in the community verses new to the community, the only data documents students coming from another county. Steve would also like to know what the total value of the project will be. Mike states there is no value at this time, just a cost of 5 million dollars. Steve then asks what the completion time will be. Mike Claflin states 12 months. Olivia explains that the handicap units in Littleton went to seniors; therefore bring no children into the community. Steve also inquires whether or not there are unused bedrooms in the Town and Country Project or does AHEAD match family size with bedrooms. Mike Claflin explains that family size and income generate what is affordable. This is not subsidized housing, rent is based on income and family size, but it is safe to say a number of units have spare bedroom. David Wood also states that the economy has generated more renters and that this is not about renting a 3 bedroom apartment to a couple, but a couple who has children might decide to stay after the kids move out. Mike Bruno would

like to know what the average stay is for tenants. David Wood states that there are people in Bethlehem Pine Manor who moved in when it was developed in 1995 who are still there.

Andrea would like further discussion on the school population. Sandy feels that it is not the authority of the Planning Board to base discussion on school enrolment that is beyond the scope of the Planning Board. Mike feels, that because it was part of AHEAD's presentation it can be part of the discussion. David Wood points out to the board that in 2009 Herb Lahout was in for a Special Exception and Site Plan Review for his 62 unit development off of Rte 142. David was present at the meetings because he is an abutter to the property. Herb's application was approved without a single question about schools or sidewalks; furthermore, Herb refused to answer questions about bedroom size because he wanted the ability to make changes, yet AHEAD is getting questions beyond the scope of the Planning Board. David requests that the board keep it within the scope of Site Plan Review. Andrea points out that school population increased as a result of Lahouts'. Jeanne points out that Lahouts' was for-profit, giving them a different tax base. David states that the 80 units currently at Lahouts' brings in \$90,000 in tax money and the 25 units at AHEAD will generate \$25,000 to \$30,000 dollars, which is not much difference at all.

**Mike opens the floor for Public Input.**

Pat Doughty requests that James Street residents be given a chance to speak first. Mike asks if any abutters have a comment. With no response Mike moves forward.

Mary Epstein would like to point out several issues. First, flooding. She feels the clear cutting of 5 acres of land would have a significant impact on flooding she already experiences at her property. She acknowledges the town already has issues and her basement often has water in it. Her second concern is about the road that runs between her house and the Beckett House. She wonders if there is enough room. Her porch is 10 feet from the property line and when the Barbers cleared the land years ago a truck got stuck and was left there for a long time. Mrs. Epstein is also concerned about the impact to the schools, feeling that a lot of the projected children will have IEPs. She goes further to state, "it is wonderful to support these people," but at what expense to the community. Nick counters that DES has an extensive Alteration of Terrain permitting process and the post-development runoff cannot be more than the pre-development runoff. He also points out that due to the lay of the land the water the Epstein's are experiencing is most likely from Noyes and James Street developments. Nick then points out that the property has 100' of frontage on Rte 302, which gives them plenty of room to remain in the setbacks. If the PB decides the access must go through Rte 302 then AHEAD will contact DOT for permitting. Mrs. Epstein asks if DOT has been contacted yet. Olivia confirms that DOT has been contacted and they see no problem with the plan. Mrs. Epstein comments that by taking trees out to build the road she will be sitting on her porch looking at the road, and not the trees. She feels this disturbs the historic feeling of the town. Mike Claflin would like to comment regarding the statement that a development like this would bring more special needs children into the school. He feels that is an unfair statement.

Don Lavoie comments that he appreciates all the public input. He thinks Andrea brought up a good point regarding impact fees. He feels the town needs to update the Capital Improvement plan before impact fees can be determined. He also states the ZBA granted a Special Exception, which means the project can be built, the Planning Board decides the project specifics; is the drainage right, is there enough lighting, and so on. He feels the big question is the access road. His suggestion is that the town retains their own engineer to determine which access point is more feasible. He adds it is within the Planning Board's authority to say the project has to go through Rte 302.

Deb Beard comments that the meeting was not made public. She questions whether or not the addition of sidewalks on James Street will mean the road has to be widened and if so does that mean the town will take property by eminent domain.

Carl Bretton would like to comment that he doesn't think the residents of James Street are concerned about traffic as much as they are concerned about how this affects the community. He feels access to this project through James Street would change the quality of life for all the residents on the street. Carl states he is currently renting where he lives, and was considering buying, but not sure he will continue in that direction should James Street no longer be a dead-end street. He also adds he does not think the space is inappropriate, but would like to see more time put into figuring out how it affects the life of the community that already exists. He also comments that while it is true no one's deed is going to prevent the project from moving forward, he hopes everyone will work together not to change James Street.

Patrick Bays states his main concern is traffic on Turner Street and wonders if Turner Street is up to par. He feels this issue needs to be taken into account.

Gary Arsenault states he has lived on James Street for 10 or 12 years now and can notice the ebb and flow of the traffic when a few houses become vacant, or a new house is built. He feels the access through James Street will make the residents' heads spin as this will be much more than they are use to.

Sandy Laleme recognizes that the access road seems to be the biggest issue and suggests the board continue the public hearing and hire an engineer to assess the site plan. She feels there are a lot of good questions being raised, but with too many assumptions. The board needs more time to assess the project and it would be helpful to have an engineer look over the plans.

Dick Robie is concerned about the water. There was never runoff down Cottage, Congress or Turner Streets until the development behind the Catholic Church was put in. He would like to be assured by some other engineer that this will be looked at and addressed. He feels no more clearing than necessary should take place.

Lisa Beard claims her property on James Street is wet and is concerned that an assessment in the summer will give a different result than one in the spring, when the most runoff is accruing. She asks the board to reconsider the entire project.

Jolee Horvath states she purchased a home on James Street less than a month ago. She states that had she known this was going on she would have purchased elsewhere. She agreed to the higher tax rate in Bethlehem because of the community and feels this project will be a big deterrent for young families. She is afraid that Bethlehem will become a more transient community.

James French has questions about the wetlands and wonders, if it is all wetlands, then why is James Street being pegged? If they are all not acceptable how does it get mitigated? Nick offers that there are no wetlands where the buildings are being placed, and states James Street has the least amount of wetlands impact. He feels Rte 302 will have the same or a little bit more impact. Mr. French asks if this is more cost driven than anything else. Nick states that cost is one factor, but wetlands impact is important, and DES will be looking for the least amount of impact.

Mary Epstein would like to apologize for bringing up Special Ed, but would like to point out that in this district Special Ed is high, and thinks that there is a good possibility there will be a significant demand for special needs. Mrs. Epstein would also like to know who is paying for the upkeep such as snow removal and sidewalk maintenance. The solar panel issue also concerns her. What will the clearing of two acres look like, along with how high the solar array needs to be and at what degree it must be tilted. She also wants to know what happens to people who are allergic to electromagnetic fields.

Deb Beard is worried about property values and feels it will affect them adversely.

Pat Doughty urges the board to have a more in-depth look at the plan. He feels water issues and the access road are major concerns. He would deny the application based on what had been presented. He feels this is a huge undertaking. The road itself is not adequate and does not think the application before the board is right.

Don Lavoie questions if the applicant can quantify the wetlands. What is the amount of wetlands disturbance for both Rte 302 and James Street. Nick feels that it is in the vicinity of 26,000 sq ft and acknowledges that DES will have to evaluate the wetlands' impact.

James Street resident Kori Dickinson states she is a long time resident and knows this will have an effect on the neighborhood. People move here for a reason.

Carol Bays' main concern is safety. She supports the project, and feels it is a good idea, but feels the increased traffic will make it impossible for her to run and walk within her neighborhood. She also feels there will be a significant increase in noise. She likes the current quietness to the neighborhood. She does not feel the \$25,000 a year in tax revenue will make a lot of difference.

Deb Beard would like to know how the project will impact the infrastructure of the water system. Nick states the looping of James Street to Rte 302 will help and improve the water pressure for the James Street area.

Mika Dickinson is concerned the new people using James St to access the development will not have the same concerns for the safety of the people who already live in the neighborhood. She states that the current residents look out for each other and thinks that might be compromised.

Dick Robie confirms the looping of the water system will help. He is also concerned about the many other projects in line for the Village District and how the budget to get these projects completed always seems to get depleted because something else come along. He is not sure of the current condition of the water lines in the area of James/Noyes/Turner Streets.

Mary Epstein feels Bethlehem is a "jewel and will be affected in a negative way." She adds that sometimes you make an investment and it works out, and sometimes it doesn't.

Rita Farrell would like to know if it was necessary for the Planning Board to have the Notice of Decision from the Zoning Board and how does the impending motion for appeal to the Zoning Board affect what happens at the Planning Board this evening. It is explained to Rita that the Special Exception had to be granted before the Planning Board could give approval. Dawn explains that the motion for appeal would be addressed by the Zoning Board and that the Planning Board could proceed with the Site Plan Review at this time. Rita questions the number of homes available in Bethlehem and what the business decision was that suggested that AHEAD should move forward with the purchase of this property. Steve Gorman states that there are presently 52 homes on the market in Bethlehem. He adds the foreclosure rate is lower than previous years, and that there have been no foreclosure homes on the market in the past several months. Rita would like to know what the history of ownership is on the property. Mike Bruno doesn't understand the relevance. The applicant owns the property now, it is irrelevant who the former owner was, and doesn't affect the current proposed project. Dawn reminds Rita that she was provided with a copy of the tax card at the ZBA meeting last week which contained the list of previous owners, what amount they purchased the property for, and when the sale happened. Rita would also like to know what the waiting list looks like for families looking for this sort of housing. What is the demand? Mike Clafin states statistics from North Country Council report that of people who rent, 1 in 3 pays more than 30% of their income. Rita would also like to know how AHEAD arrived at the figure of 24 to 25 school age children and what portion of them are already in the Bethlehem school system and therefore not adding to the volume. Mike Clafin conveys the statistics from existing housing projects. Based on historic information 6 to 7 of every 25 are already in the school systems. Rita is concerned the information presented is based on models and not true data. Mike states AHEAD is forecasting the project.

Mary Epstein asks if AHEAD would need a variance if they needed to build the road from Rte 302. She is informed there would be no need for a variance from the town, but they would need a permit from NH DOT.

Jeanne Robillard wants to remind everyone that this project is not subsidized housing. It is affordable housing and requires a certain income to qualify. She comments that AHEAD has a great track record

within our community and this project can be an asset. She identifies the main concerns to be the access road and water.

Sandy Laleme would like to know what resources AHEAD used to base their Site Plan. Was there a civil engineer, did they contact North Country Council? What were the qualifications of the other people who have contributed to the plan? Olivia states they used a Master Planner/Architectural Engineer during the process to identify some of the issues and realized the phase that were presented in their conceptual weren't going to be the best use of the land and modified the plans to make the best use of the site. They are using Black River Design out of Montpelier, VT as well as engineers for the solar array, Ray Lobdell out of Landaff for environmental consulting and Gardner Kellogg for surveying and mapping.

Marie Stevenson' would like to know the time frame as it relates to growth that the sewage plant can handle. Dick Robie explains that if the sewage treatment plant was inadequate it would fall on Bethlehem to rectify the inadequacy.

Don Lavoie urges the board to discuss bonding. David Wood agrees this is a good point.

**Motion made by Sandy Laleme, seconded by Andrea Bryant, that the Planning Board obtains an engineer to assess the following:**

- **Which access road serves the population best, both current neighborhoods and the potential new neighborhood?**
- **What is the potential effect on water runoff/drainage for the neighborhood?**

**And to continue the public hearing for two weeks, to continue on Wednesday, August 26 at 6:30. All members vote in favor, the motion carries.**

Steve Gorman informs the board he will be out of town on the 26th.

Mike Bruno feels it would be in everyone's best interest if AHEAD began a conversation with the residents of James Street.

The board reviews the minutes from July 22, 2015.

**Motion made by Chris McGrath, seconded by Steve Gorman to approve the minutes as presented. All in favor, motion carries.**

**Motion made by Andrea Bryant, seconded by Steve Gorman to adjourn at 9:57.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Ferringo  
Planning and Zoning Board Clerk