



CITY OF NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board

---

**REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**April 11, 2022**

**Call to order**

6:00 p.m.

**Members present virtually**

Chairman Brian Miksic, Lynette Ritland Bond, Robert Burdick, Kyle Hanlon, Kayla Hollins, Rye Howard, Jesse Egan-Poirier, and Paul Senecal

**Members absent** Lisa Blackmer

**Others present virtually** Alexis Boutin, Katherine Hand - Berkshire Cider, Ashley | Cullion-Traverse Landscape, Bill Meranti, Collin Kane, George Cucitrono, Ivan Stojakovic, Jeff Grandchamp, Jennifer Bernard, Jessica Sweeney, John Anthony, Mary Cummings, Matt Brogan, Sarah Eustis, Tammy Daniels and other members of the public

**Public hearings new business**

- **Case No: SPA2022-04** Application of Jessica Sweeney for property located at 53 Main Street. Special permit requested for a Change of Use to operate Retail in a CBD zone.

Chairman Miksic opened up to the applicant for a brief overview.

Jessica Sweeney mentions I currently operate as a vendor in Berkshire Emporium on Holden Street. I would like to move that to 53 Main Street and operate retail so I can have handmade clothing, handmade local products, and have my office in the back.

Chairman Miksic opened up questions or comments from the board or public.

No questions or comments.

Chairman Miksic requested a motion from the board. Board Member Hanlon motions to close the public hearing with a second by Board member Senecal. Roll call was done. All in favor. Motion carries.

- **Case No: SPA2022-05** Application of Berkshire Cider Project, LLC for property located at 360-362 State Road. Special permit requested for a Change of Use to operate Craft Spirits (hard Cider) Production, Distribution & accessory Sales in a B-1 zone.

Chairman Miksic opened up to the applicant for a brief overview.

Kathrine Hand mentions my husband and I own Berkshire Cider Project, we make fine sparkling hard cider from both local and imported apples. We are currently located at Greylock Works on State Road. We opened about two years ago in July 2020, mid

pandemic selling cider direct to consumer out our back window, and last year we were able to open our tasting room which is co-located with our production facility. We have grown a lot in the last two years, which ramped up our production, we have hired several part time and seasonal staff and we are quickly outgrowing our tiny space here, which we knew and hoped that we would. We are currently in negotiations to purchase the property which includes 360-362 State Road which is formally West Autobody. This will allow us to move our inventory storage, some equipment as well as much of our production of our hard cider allowing us to make more hard cider and expand the capacity at our tasting room at Greylock Works. Once we move stuff from here to the new location, we will be able to welcome more people and hire more folks. This special permit for change of use is an important part for us to move forward with the purchase of 360-362 State Road which would be used for storage of bottles, equipment, inventory, bulk aging of cider and then eventually moving production there as well. We do everything seasonally, low intervention so it is not like brewing, there is not a lot of heat, or pressure like there is for distilling. We are really talking about interior operations and change of use so we don't expect any exterior changes at this time as this is not public facing at the moment.

Chairman Miksic opened up questions or comments from the board.

Board member Burdick inquires what kind of waste do you expect to be producing at this particular venue?

Katherine Hand mentions not a lot actually. Most of our juice that we use to ferment actually gets delivered from orchards. So, they pick the fruit there, press it and deliver us the juice so it goes straight into our tanks. We do process a small amount of fruit in our space with a small press that we have, so we are left with spent/pressed apple skins or dried pumas. We have created great relationships with folks like Cricket Creek and other Farms where we can take the pumas down and they feed it to their pigs and other livestock. Other than that, we probably have packing materials, and some pallets but it's a pretty low waste operation.

Board member Burdick inquires where will your waste collector or dumpster be situated on the property?

Katherine Hand mentions we will have a dumpster in front of West Autobody probably on the left side, it is behind a fence but there is plenty of access for trucks to come in and get it. We also have plenty of room inside to store any pallets and things like that so there will not be any unsightly pile ups.

Vice Chairwoman Bond inquires are you planning on addressing that sign, to be able to reuse that or do something with that sign out there?

Katherine Hand mentions yes, we put that on the radar of the current owner as it is currently a safety issue at this moment. I will follow up on that.

Chairman Miksic mentions that the sign was my only question. So, when we are moving on this in our regular meeting I would like to add a specific amendment to make sure that the sign will be taken care of one way or the other.

Chairman Miksic opened up to questions from the public.

No questions.

Chairman Miksic requested a motion from the board. Board member Hanlon motions to close the public hearing with a second by Board member Burdick. Roll call was done. All in favor. Motion carries

• **Case No: SPA2022-06** Application of John Anthony for property located at 149 Eagle Street. Special permit requested for a Change of Use to operate a Music School in a B-1 zone.

Chairman Miksic opened up to the applicant for a brief overview.

John Anthony mentions I plan on teaching private lessons for guitar, voice, piano and bass. It is going to be the type of operation where one client will be there at a time and whoever is waiting for them. The next student will come in a few minutes about a 5-10-minute time where both parties will be in the waiting room. The times are from about after school until eight or nine, usually I have older students coming in at the later times. I have been doing this for 30-years, I am new to the area, and when I came out here there was no one to work for so I found a space.

Chairman Miksic opened up questions or comments from the board or public.

No questions or comments.

Chairman Miksic requested a motion from the board. Board Member Hanlon motions to close the public hearing with a second by Board member Burdick. Roll call was done. All in favor. Motion carries.

• **Case No: SPA2022-07** Application of Colin Kane for property located at 40 Main Street. Special permit requested for a Demolition of existing structure, Site improvements for direct accessible access to restaurant to operate a Hotel in a CBD zone.

Chairman Miksic opened up to the applicant for a brief overview.

Colin Kane mentions I am joined here tonight with other members of my team Sarah Eustis who is CEO and president of Main Street Hospitality who operates the hotel and operates Porches, Mary Cummings who is our senior project manager that has been managing this project for the last 10-12 months, George Cucitrone who is our project architect from Dileonardo, with whom we have completed several hotel projects, Ashley Cullion from Traverse Landscape architects that we have done about 10-12 projects with her and her team, and Jeff Grandchamp who is our local counsel. We are third party project managers. We work extensively in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, anything from public high schools to one of specialty projects. We also occasionally invest in our own projects, this being one of them. We recently completed a Waterfront Hotel in Newport, with Main Street Hospitality as our partner. We have done a presentation to the City Council and expect to continue those updates relative to the public. Our primary objective for the property is to upgrade it. It was built in 1974. In the early 80's we called it the annex building and was built along American Legion Way. It is losing the fight to gravity and to the fight to the building systems. If you ever visited the hotel, you'll realize when you go from the parking lot into the lobby, you walk around that building which has no store front windows. It almost looks like a dive bar. It is a very awkward entryway. We hope to get permission to remove that building and completely re-orient the lobby back to its original configuration from 1974, providing much more green space, and more lights/brightness and activity into that lobby. We will be gut rehabbing we hope, the lobby and the restaurant, as they are not ADA compliant. George will talk more about that. We hope to install ADA compliant ramp access to the restaurant from the outside, ADA accessible bathrooms and toilets. Really upgrading the lobby in a meaningful way, hopefully the streetscape. The streetscape is rather dark today, as much as there are well trimmed hedges, the building really isolates itself from a very primary and what we think of as an important corner to the City. Our hope is that we can soften the approach with lighting the landscaping around the building and sidewalks and the activities itself inside the building and lighting that appears along the American Legion Way as we head towards the fire station. There will also be light touching the common areas, the rooms with the goal of not making it boutique.

George Cucitrone mentions I think one of the biggest improvements is the proposed addition of a ramp on the main street side of the building which would give direct access from the exterior of the building to the restaurant. The only accessible means into the restaurant is through the existing hotel lobby and a small lounge area that comes in on the side. There is also no direct accessible way to get to the exterior dining on the porch so the addition of this ramp will solve both of those issues by giving it a dedicated accessible means into the restaurant and allowing access to the exterior dining as well. By removing the existing building, what we call the add on building (it was clearly built after the original building sometime in the 80's) which is having a bunch of performance issues, we can also take the main entrance into the building off American Legion Way so you wouldn't need to park there and enter the building that way. We can bring it off into the existing parking lot area and re-orient the entrance to that side, making it a nicer entrance into the building. On the inside, there are some deficiencies in terms of the existing restrooms, we are proposing new restrooms that will bring the required fixture count up to what is required by code and make them fully accessible. There are no plan changes to the restaurant, the event room or to the existing kitchen or back of house areas.

Colin Kane mentions we will also be creating a new, what I will call, landscaped area you may see on your plans that it may be highlighted as turf. We went in circles about options relative to what I will call that green area, with the goal to be able to program that green area and we ended up with a turf solution. This is not meant to be retro, this is a turf that you would see close to something on the college lacrosse field. It is meant to give us an opportunity to soften that area as you drive along American Legion Way but also give it an opportunity for outdoor programming for furniture and make it more of a community asset, and we also hope this for the lobby as well.

Ashley | Cullion mentions what we are excited about is that once the add-on, as George described is removed, we have this new real estate available for outdoor space. We are creating one unloading space located next to the entrance, a space to put your bag down, creating an elegant walkway that comes right to the entry. That walkway is flanked by two green spaces which Colin mentioned we have this great opportunity to use artificial turf which I know isn't something you see often but this is a perfect application for it because it is a smaller area and it will be readily used and it will allow us that programming that can change over the seasons. We are framing that space in with new ornament shaped trees which are going to start delineating our green edge and adding new foundation plantings across the entire facing sides of the building. We are also doing some light upgrades on the walkway. Currently there is a large light pole next to the building that will be removed for this new walkway to be installed, with lights that will lead you in, creating a nicer glow and more effective entryway.

Colin Kane mentions I assume the board will ask about signage, which would be an appropriate question. We have not yet come to an agreement on what an appropriate sign is. We think it will be painted, not back lit, and be much more subtle of a sign because it is one of the entry ways to the City We just have not finalized that design yet. We will have that plan, we're hoping in the next

several weeks to the extent we need to come back to the Planning Board. We are more than happy to share that before we install it. We hope to have meaningful improvement to the directory signage as well. We are trying to make this as local as possible. Dave Merazzi is our contractor. We hope to the extent we get approvals tonight that we can initiate work fairly soon. We have to complete our buyout, as we all know things are costing more than they did six months ago, and lead times are looking more like four to six months, but we are pretty good about working around that. Our hope is to the extent if we are able to get approval tonight and your endorsement of the project and demolition, that we would be starting work sometime in June, while remaining open. We may need to shut down a few times to manage water and electrical shut downs but remaining open this summer to keep the restaurant functioning and the hotel operating during the summer while completing this work sometime by the end of this year.

Chairman Miksic opened up questions or comments from the board.

Vice Chairwoman Bond inquires about what is coming next? This is a very exciting project. I know we are only looking at demolition and some of those improvements for accessibility, but will you be coming back for signage, parking, lighting and some of those other site plan pieces?

Colin Kane mentions so for the signage yes. We do not anticipate any real changes to the parking as it is currently configured other than the drop off spaces or spaces that may be reflected in that landscape plan. We don't anticipate anything more than clean up. In the long term I would like to repave and restripe it. From interactions with leadership at City Hall, there was at one point, an easement that allowed City employees to cut underneath the highway bridge through the parking lot and get out easily as opposed to sitting five cycles of the light on the exit on Main Street. We are very open to considering that. There is just a lot to unwrap in that relative to easement safety, parking count, all of which we are prepared to resource but we just have to go sequentially, relative to our improvements.

Chairman Miksic inquires can someone explain the new ramp that is going to go up to the restaurant? I am just not seeing how it lays out on these plans, is that drawn in these plans? Or is that starting all the way at the corner there?

George Cucitrone mentions it is, yes. In order to make it work, what we have to do is pour a light weight concrete on the existing porch to raise it up about seven inches because there is a seven-inch difference between the restaurant porch and the inside of the building.

Chairman Miksic inquires you are talking about the entire porch is going to come up seven inches, so it would be flush with the restaurant?

George Cucitrone - no, it will not. No, not the restaurant porch.

Chairman Miksic inquires the little one in front of those two studios as it is listed on there.

George Cucitrone - exactly. So, you will come out of the restaurant and then it ramps down to the rest, it is challenging to pour that much concrete over an existing slab. Not to mention the expense when we can access it via this ramp.

Chairman Miksic inquires so there is still going to be a step from the restaurant to the porch, correct?

George Cucitrone - yes, you will come out to a little landing. And yes, it will step down.

Chairman Miksic inquires as far as accessibility is concerned, the only accessible access to the porch is via this new ramp, correct?

George Cucitrone mentions yes. Where the existing entrance is at the restaurant, that whole piece gets raised up. So you will come out of those double doors, which are actually existing, and we will just have to move them up seven inches and then you would ramp down from there to the existing porch.

Chairman Miksic inquires so you will have an accessible route directly from the restaurant to the restaurant porch?

George Cucitrone - yes.

Chairman Miksic mentions it has always been an issue and I do not envy you having to deal with that situation.

George Cucitrone mentions it was a little tricky but I think it is a good minimal solution that really touches the outside of the building very little.

Chairman Miksic inquires so the existing overhang where people currently pull up to unload, is that overhang going to stay? And are the curb cuts going to stay?

George Cucitrono - yes, that is all going to stay. It won't be treated as the main entrance into the building but it's still is an accessible way into the building.

Chairman Miksic mentions back to signage, I would like us to dial in a time frame on getting signage. I think the current large sign is tastefully done, but temporarily. I would like to just have, at the very least, a hard date that you will at least come back and update us on where that's going to be. I understand design particularly when there is a lot of cooks in the kitchen, and trying to figure that all out. We would like to get something a little more binding, so that we know that there is not going to just be vinyl hanging on the building for years to come.

Colin Kane mentions no, that's a good question. We have ten designs that we have all looked at and I believe now are down to two. Our final, let's call it, endorsement of that concept design scheduled next week. We need to run that through our signage professional to get the specifications. Then we have to validate that with the building inspector that we are not violating any code requirements relative to area to get it appropriately identified sooner than later so I would think we could get it to you in about six-eight weeks, and certainly will not put anything up until we come back.

Chairman Miksic mentions this is my personal opinion, I think the idea of painting it on the brick like we would have done in days of yore is just a fantastic one and I think it could look great. I also think that this is not a brutalist but a post-brutalist building that can harken back to buildings that graced that side of Main Street, and I think that signage can help do that at one point hopefully.

Colin Kane mentions and that is our objective and I think that is why we have gone in circles multiple times.

Board member Howard mentions I know you have mentioned the artificial turf and I know you expect push back on that. I would just say I would like to push back on it for the record as a toxicologist. I am not a big fan and I would like would highly recommend looking at other options. It is not clear to me what programming you need in that space so it may not be relevant.

Colin Kane mentions I would like to address board member Howard about the turf. We did go in circles with this. We have seen it applied in other places. The challenge we have with grass is that it is not going to hold up well, and pavement is not really soft to run around on. We really wanted to have something that would brighten the space, it is greener, you are not cutting it, or putting nitrogen on it. We really do hope we have endorsement from the board on the turf solution.

Ashley | Cullion mentions I would like to add, we understand that it is artificial turf but we are surrounding it with a good deal of more plants, some native and new trees too so we are trying to balance that in a positive way. Grass can be tough to grow in the best of scenarios so if you're moving around a chair on it, and people moving around all the time, the likelihood of it becoming mud is very real so we are just trying to avoid that.

Chairman Miksic opened up questions or comments from the public.

No questions.

Chairman Miksic requested a motion from the Board. Board Member Hanlon motions to close the public hearing with a second by Board member Burdick. Roll call was done. All in favor. Motion carries.

## **Approval of Minutes**

- Public Hearing – March 8, 2022

Chairman Miksic requested a motion. Board member Hanlon motions to approve with a second by Board member Senecal. With 6 Yeas and two abstention. Motion Carries.

- Regular Meeting – March 14, 2022

Chairman Miksic requested a motion. Board member Burdick Motions to approve with a second by Vice Chairwoman Bond.

Amendment by Board member Burdick on 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> page where I am mentioned, I think one of the last words should have been fair not far.

Roll call done. All in favor. Motion carries.

## **New Business**

- **Case No: SPA2022-04** Application of Jessica Sweeney for property located at 53 Main Street. Special permit requested for a Change of Use to operate Retail in a CBD zone

Chairman Miksic requests a motion. Board member Hanlon motions to approve with a second by Board member Burdick. Roll call done. All in favor. Motion carries.

- **Case No: SPA2022-05** Application of Berkshire Cider Project, LLC for property located at 360-362 State Road. Special permit requested for a Change of Use to operate Craft Spirits (hard Cider) Production, Distribution & accessory Sales in a B-1 zone.

Chairman Miksic requested a motion. Board member Egan-Poirer motions to approve with a second by Board member Burdick.

Board member Hanlon adds condition that the existing free-standing sign needs to be improved or removed.

Roll call done. All in favor. Motion carries

- **Case No: SPA2022-06** Application of John Anthony for property located at 149 Eagle Street. Special permit requested for a Change of Use to operate a Music School in a B-1 zone.

Chairman Miksic requests a motion. Board member Hanlon motions to approve with a second by Board member Burdick. Roll call done. All in favor. Motion carries.

- **Case No: SPA2022-07** Application of Colin Kane for property located at 40 Main Street. Special permit requested for a Demolition of existing structure, Site improvements for direct accessible access to restaurant to operate a Hotel in a CBD zone.

Chairman Miksic requests a motion. Board member Hanlon motions to approve with a second by Board member Burdick.

Board member Hanlon adds condition that they come back for signage.

Roll call done. All in favor. Motion carries.

## **Other business**

- **Ivan Stojakovic; Signage for Ground Art located at 1 Canal Street**

Vice Chairwoman Bond inquires on the first image that is part of our packet, the diagram around on the retaining wall. Do you own that structure? What is the use on that structure?

Ivan Stojakovic mentions we do not own that structure. I will be meeting with the owner of that structure who owns the gas station to discuss the potential allowance of mounting on his retaining wall, but we do not yet if we want it there. We have three potential spots for that signage. I outlined or circled those spots and we will have to make the final decision on this spot based on the impact. If we want to mount it on the retaining wall we won't unless approved by the owner to use the wall which is right between our two properties.

Vice Chairwoman Bond inquires can I ask of the building inspector, is there integrity issues with that retaining wall?

Ivan Stojakovic mentions I am also meeting with the owner to discuss moving forward to repointing that wall to stabilize any potential integrity issues. As far as we know right now, the wall is holding but there is a problem with the corner with a lack of mortar between the bricks.

Bill Meranti mentions the short answer is that we don't know the stability of the wall. The owner may have other

issues for us to be allowing signage on that property. I think if this board approves, it would have to be left up to the City Building department, the zoning rules as to if that could ever go up on that property. There has been no discussion with my office about it, I think we need more information.

Board member Hanlon inquires I imagine the same square footage applies.

Bill Meranti mentions technically it becomes an off-site sign. It is not on his property. It crosses a few lines, property lines, zoning lines. I think the issue with that property is it is not the best choice for an off-site sign given the condition of the property.

Chairman Miksic inquires Ivan would it be possible for you to remove that piece of signage from this discussion right now and should you decide or get approval from the owner, come back, is that acceptable?

Ivan Stojakovic mentions yes, that is acceptable. We would not go forward even if it was approved by you unless that wall is first repaired as this would only be a way to cover up the problem.

Board member Hanlon requests a motion to approve with an amendment to accept the signage as presented with the exception of the signage shown on the retaining wall of the adjacent property with a second by Vice Chairwoman Bond.

Board member Howard inquires for clarification, there is going to only be one sign not two correct?

Ivan Stojakovic mentions there are two. There is a plan to put one on the front facial of the main entry and second sign has three potential locations out of which only one is the retaining wall and we don't even know if we want it there.

Board Member Howard mentions they meant of the second sign there are three possible locations but only one sign will go up. Can you clarify the second one in the middle? It looks like it is free standing or mounted on the fence there.

Ivan Stojakovic mentions yes, the fence belongs to me. It would be appropriate to utilize it as I am at a corner position visible from the cross roads of Canal and Eagle Street, which is the idea of the sign. This sign is not about advertising the building but this is located this way, walk this way if you want to visit the studios.

Board member Howard mentions they like the one on the retaining wall, they are all good.

Roll call done. All in favor. Motion carries.

- Discussion of returning to in person meetings

Chairman Miksic mentions he just wanted to put this out there. The Mayor requested that all the boards discuss it. My two cents on the matter is that while I am completely unopposed to returning to the chambers to have these meetings, I want to make sure that we have the technology to continue a hybrid version of these meetings. Both the applicants and the public can interact with the meeting virtually. I have been on the board for over a decade now and I have never seen as many people be able to sit in the gallery on a regular basis that have been able to come during these video meetings. And I think the more people that can attend the better, I would like to see what you think and then we can vote on this.

Board member Hanlon mentions I am in favor of returning to in person meetings.

Vice Chairwoman Bond mentions I would agree but I do like the option of hybrid, and allowing remote participation especially for those who may not be in North Adams to be able to attend but also just to allow us more accessibility to be able to do meetings. I would like to return to in person with the provision that we do have remote capability.

Board member Burdick inquires how would you do that? Using the projector with a computer and a sound system?

Board member Miksic mentions that we would have to figure out. I spoke with the City Clerk, and the technology is already in place to be able to do that. But as to what that actually looks like, I'm not sure. That is something we would have to figure out as well.

Board member Hanlon mentions also if we do a hybrid, I am all for it as it increases attendance from the public. I would like to get a set of clear-cut rules. I may be mistaken but if we do a hybrid at a public meeting, we still need to have a quorum of us in the building. At least that is how I interrupted it last time I had this discussion.

Chairman Miksic mentions that is a really good point because in my mind, I had us all there. But at the same time, that is actually a really good point as it would allow for better attendance.

Board member Hanlon mentions I imagine the State has some guidelines.

Chairman Miksic mention even if they don't I still think this is something we still would want to do. Seems you would want to have a quorum in person regardless of if that is the rule or not, at least to me.

Board member Senecal mentions I am in favor of going back in person. I would also like to see if we could get our planning board packets sent to us rather than us having to print them out on our printers.

Vice Chairwoman Bond requests a motion we go back to in person meetings with the option for the board members and the public to attend and participate remotely with a second by board member Hanlon. Roll call done. All in favor. Motion Carries.

- Roll call to enter into Executive Session.

it was voted by unanimous yea vote to enter into executive session.

Board member Hanlon motioned to close executive session with a second by board member Senecal. Roll call vote done. All in favor.

### **Enforcement Issues**

Cumberland Farms needs to put the old spot on Ashland Street on the market and keep the old property clean.

Members of the Board request that Bill Meranti follow up on this matter.

**Adjournment** Motion to adjourn 7:15 p.m.

A True Copy,  
Attest



s/Alexis Boutin  
Planning Board Secretary