

Planning Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

March 7, 2016

Town Council Chambers

Present

Councillor Willie Cormier, Chair

Councillor S. Cameron

Councillor J. MacPherson

Mayor C. Chisholm

B. Gottschall

B. MacLean

A. Murray left the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

T. Sherrington

D. Watling, STFX rep joined the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

S. Feist, CAO

S. Day, Planner

B. Nheiley, Planner

S. Scannell, Special Project Coordinator

D. Halfpenny, Secretary

Guests

Deputy Mayor L. Boucher

Members of the Antigonish Rental Association

Citizens

Absent

S. Hargreaves

Call to Order

Chair, W. Cormier called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

“It was moved and seconded, that the Agenda for the Planning Advisory Committee meeting of be approved with the addition of Planning Advisory Committee membership.”

Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

“It was moved and seconded that the Minutes of the Planning Advisory Committee meeting held on December 14, 2015 be approved with the wording change from average to median households and heading changed from Maple Drive to Maple Street.”

Motion carried.

Membership

Committee Member A. Murray stated that the term for Planning Advisory Committee Members should have been advertised in March of 2015. He said that since terms should have expired then it was assumed by Committee members that their terms had been extended for an additional 2 years. Therefore he said the terms would expire in 2017. A. Murray said he had not received notification of expiry of term.

S. Feist said that a notice had been sent by staff on Feb 17, 2016 to all committee members of the Beautification and Planning Advisory Committee Members outlining the Advisory Committee Policy requirements. He said that it was a group mailout so that all committee members would have received the email. He said submissions will be reviewed by Council. He said the Advisory Committee Policy is intended to ensure that new ideas are generated and that new people be given the opportunity to participate.

A review of the group email sent noted that A. Murray's email address is part of the group and therefore he should have received the notice on Feb 17, 2016. A copy of the original email was forwarded to A. Murray on March 8, 2016.

Committee Member B. MacLean said that until the matter is sorted out the current advertising for new members should be postponed and a new date for applications chosen based on the outcome of Council's review of the existing policy.

Committee Member T. Sherrington said that when the Advisory Committee Policy had been amended in 2013 discussion had been held on ensuring that terms didn't end on an election year. He said that the potential to lose experienced people could create a situation where you have a committee of new councillors and new members which would create a large learning curve and may decrease the effectiveness of the Planning Advisory Committee. He said that also the policy does not state a start date. He said that over the period of time he has served on the Planning Advisory Committee there have been numerous changes in Council and eleven new people have been on the Planning Advisory Committee for various timeframes. He said that fresh ideas and new people have been added.

W. Cormier said that Council will decide and that members wanting to apply for an additional term should submit their applications by March 11, 2016 at 12 noon as per instructions noted in the advertisements in local newspaper, on town website and local radio, as per the Advisory Committee Policy.

Business Arising from Minutes

Rooming/Lodging Houses

S. Day reviewed the requirement for a variety of types of housing that the Town of Antigonish is mandated to provide as outlined in the Municipal Government Act, Municipal Planning Strategy, and in compliance with the Land use Bylaw while ensuring that NS Building Code,

and Fire Code Rules and Regulations are followed in the building and renovation of structures in Town of Antigonish. He noted that R1 zones are meant to be low density.

S. Day said that a large number of bedrooms causes increased density such as the 14 bedroom property. He said the current definitions do not prevent such a development from occurring. He said it is necessary to provide the opportunity for better family neighbourhoods. S. Day said a clear definition is needed to ensure R1 requirements are met. He said the town needs to have a variety of housing options and as such some areas may need to be rezoned to allow for higher density development. He said with the change in traffic patterns and street designation there will be opportunities for rezoning to R2 and R3 for higher density housing needs.

S. Day said that current homes in R1 zones that have more than 4 bedrooms for rent will be grandfathered. He said discussion at the Planning Advisory Committee meetings and research into what other communities are doing as well as Fire Safety Regulations and demographics has led to the concept of limiting the number of bedrooms to 4 bedrooms. He said this was based on the average size of a family.

S. Day said that Antigonish is unique. He said that usually rooming houses are a means of affordable housing. He said in big cities such as Toronto rooms can be rented for \$350 while here in Antigonish rooms can cost anywhere from \$450 to \$525 a room.

It was noted in the previous meeting that the rental community had objections to the use of the word rooming house. S. Day said that he had no objection to calling them lodging houses. He said however, he had spoken to J. Burke at Scotia Bank and had been told by Mr. Burke that it doesn't matter what the Town does as the bank completes their own investigation and identifies anything beyond six bedrooms as suspect. He said Mr. Burke indicated that the bank is more likely to give mortgages to those purchasing an existing building with tenants. S. Day said he was surprised that the bank is less likely to give a mortgage on a new build. He said how the property is used is also subjective. The bank decides based on the business model on a case by case bases.

S. Day addressed questions he had received from C. Henderson. He commented on Halifax and Wolfville's definitions to prevent high density development in R1 zones. He explained Fire Code Regulations and Building Code requirements for R1 family homes as compared to homes where residents are not related and therefore, in the case of fire he said additional fire stop requirements may need to be in place to protect the residents. He said dwellings that have five units or more are required to have a Fire Inspection, and that a schedule is followed based on provincial requirements. Each lodging unit is considered a suite.

Councillor W. Cormier, Chair said, " just to recap R1 zones with lodging houses of more than 4 bedrooms will be grandfathered. However, they will require inspection to determine if additional safety requirements need to be met and that the Fire Safety Acts and Regulations are being adhered to and therefore the Fire Inspector will need to do a site visit. He reiterated that the provincial requirements must be met and that at the end of the day it is about safety.

He said the proposed changes to the exact number of bedrooms may change and basically it will be up to Council to approve and give first reading.”

W. Cormier asked S. Day what is the next step.

S. Day said that his next step is to seek a legal opinion. He said obviously the town of Antigonish Bylaws are currently at odds with the policy.

A member of Public said that with StFx University planning to increase enrolment in upcoming years, it is vital to allow these large family homes that are left on the market for years due to size and amount of renovations required to be given new life as rental properties. He said there are streets such as Arbor, Coady and Landsdowne for example that have 40 to 60 year old homes with 5 or more bedrooms. He said no one will purchase these houses for a single family home. He said at least with the landlords investing in these properties the tax base is being increased.

Committee Member A. Murray left the meeting.

S. Day said that definitely these types of situations would have to be looked at and some areas would require rezoning to R3 to better meet the needs of these properties. He said there are approximately 40% single person households and that updates are required to meet housing needs.

Councillor Cameron said he agreed that these larger family homes should be permitted to maintain their existing number of bedrooms.

Flag/Lots and Infill Development

B. Nheiley provide a presentation on Flag Lots. She provide a brief review of the history of Flag Lots in Antigonish and listed the features required to be addressed in order to consider reinstating Flag Lots while avoiding the problems of the past. She explained that on average there was one flag lot property developed a year while Flag Lots were permitted in the Town of Antigonish and therefore it is unlikely that there would be a large number of Flag Lots developed each year moving forward should Flag Lots be permitted.

B. Nheiley explained that permitting Flag Lot development may provide affordable housing options and allow seniors flexibility in being able to stay in their homes longer. She said that efficient infrastructure, constrained development, homeowners reinvesting in services, and increasing Town tax base are all positive. She said the challenges would be insuring proper buffering to allow for privacy , preventing nuisance issues, proper management of stormwater, insuring architectural quality, allowing for access for emergency services, determining the cost of extending utilities and attention to internal development processes.

B. Nheiley said that in order to protect from unwanted outcomes community input is necessary and that new ways of engaging in public discussion should be looked at to get a

clearer picture from a diverse group of citizens who may for whatever reason be unwilling or unable to attend a public hearing. She said having a kiosk set up at local grocery store or mall, in a vacant store front etc. are all options for additional engagement.

She explained two types of potential flag lot development and provided visual examples of Flag Lot development in the R1 zone and in commercial zones. She noted that a shared driveway would create challenges for parking, and potentially issues for emergency vehicles and that these concerns would need to be addressed in the planning of such a development. She said that in the case of a commercial development concerns such as walkability, and bike safety would also have to be considered. Buffering in both cases would be extremely important as would stormwater management and outdoor green space.

A member of the public asked about consideration for snow storage.

B. Nheiley said that a proper plan of snow clearing would need to be taken into consideration for each Flag Lot. She said space would need to be allocated to deal with snow removal on the site plan.

Committee Member D. Watling joined the meeting 6:10 p.m.

Councillor W. Cormier asked Committee members whether they were in favor of Flag Lots.

D. Watling said with proper planning and public consultation she would be in favour of either type of Flag Lot Development.

Councillor, J. MacPherson agreed that Flag Lot would require an intensive amount of public consultation and provided the community was in agreement that a Flag Lot was acceptable he would be in favour. He said it would have to be through Development Agreement.

Councillor S. Cameron said he is not in favour of Flag Lots and would not support it. He said whether the Flag Lot was developed into a single family residence or a rental property would be unknown. He said it would be a lifetime change for the people living beside the Flag Lot.

T Sherrington said he was not in favor of Flag Lots in R1 zones but would support Flag Lots in commercial zones through development agreement.

B. MacLean said he agreed with T. Sherrington.

Mayor C. Chisholm said he was favour of Flag Lots provided they were done through Development Agreement and had adequate public consultation. He said that one way or another a decision should be reached by spring as to either move forward with Flag Lots or shelve the matter.

B. Nheily said that if all conditions are met that the draft Flag Lot Policy could be presented to PAC by June.

B. Gottschall said he agreed with the Mayor that it should take place with careful public consultation and through Development Agreement.

Councillor W. Cormier said he was in favor of both types of Flag Lots with the public consultation and through Development Agreement only.

B. Nheily will continue working on Flag Lot Policy.

Sylvan Valley Addition

B. Nheiley said she and other town staff had meet with a representative of S. Smith concerning an addition to Sylvan Valley senior apartments complex. She said that the representative had discussed changes to a previous submission and spoke of challenges need to be overcome to facilitate the addition.

B. Nheiley said that there are a number of outstanding items for the the developer to address because the County of Antigonish and the Department of Transportation must first agree that the addition can move forward as this particular parcel was developed as a Flag Lot with primary vehicle access via the County of Antigonish.

S. Day said since the Flag Lot Policy was repealed there are additional challenges as the Development Agreement will be changed. He said the small strip of land leading to the Sylvan Valley Road has an easement and the portion of land at the back has a water line that would either need to be moved at the owner's expense or another option is to change the design, consolidate the property and adjacent property to facilitate the expansion by adding onto the existing structure..

B Nheiley noted that until the developer decides on a course of action staff can not move forward with initial steps of fire protection requirement assessment, stormwater management and parking requirements. She said no new information had been received since the initial meeting.

Mayor C. Chisholm asked what it would take to move the project along.

S.Day said until the plan is received and the letters of support from County of Antigonish and Department of Transportation there is nothing that staff can do.

B Nheiley said that the developers plan is still very fluid. When the plan is received staff will be able to start the process. She said other departments have been made aware of initial expression of interest to expand the Sylvan Valley senior complex.

T. Sherrington asked why Planning Advisory Committee is looking at this now as there are no firm plans in place. He asked if this was a waste of staff time and committee time. He said

there were other developers that had brought projects before the Planning Advisory Committee and nothing ever happened.

B. Nheiley said that the meeting was merely a conceptual discussion to determine options before the Developer spends money.

S. Day said market conditions change and dictate whether the developer can move forward.

Councillor W. Cormier, Chair will follow up with the developer to see when materials will be submitted to the Town for review.

Gateway Commercial Amendments:

Nothing new to report

Environmental Amendments:

Work Ongoing

DA Updates

Nothing new to report.

Court St. Correctional Facility

Demolition Permit has not been applied for and further expressions of interest have been received by the County of Antigonish.

MHP Permit Fee Incentives

Nothing new to report.

Mobile Home Parks

Water improvements have been made to one of the local Mobile Home Parks. Residents of this park had been experiencing low to no water pressure. Residents concerns have been addressed concerning water pressure. Park owner plans to do additional upgrades over the next few years.

S. Day said changes to the Land Use ByLaw are being considered to allow Mobile Home parks to develop other types of housing. He said when the new policy is written and passed it will allow for more durable and attractive housing.

Maple Drive - Emergency Response

Work Ongoing.

New Business

Concerns in R1 Parking Areas

Councillor J. MacPherson said that he had concerns about parking on Arbor Drive. He said there are rental units with 6 bedroom that have 6 students with cars. Cars are parked on the lawn in winter and on the street in summer.

S. Day said that cars are not allowed to be parked on lawns and therefore it is a matter of enforcement. He said issues such as these exemplify how increased density in R1 zones can be a problem.

Councillor S. Cameron said he will bring the matter to the attention of bylaw enforcement at the Police and Licensing Committee.

Meeting with A. Beckett

S. Day said he had meet with A. Beckett to discuss a host of things, he said that they had discussed the potential of StFx leasing land for the development of student housing on Church Street facing the Antigonish Market Square and West Street areas. A. Beckett will look into whether this is an option StFX would like to pursue.

They had also discussed Car Share coming to Antigonish. The Car Share program would decrease some of the parking issues on campus as students wouldn't need to have a personal vehicle. He said StFX was interested in exploring this option,

B. MacLean said that the potential to develop a tier parking structure behind the Bloomfield Center would also be beneficial to ease parking issues on the StFX campus.

New Chamber Executive Director

Awaiting the release of names of the new executive. Expected to be forthcoming in next two weeks.

Fire Inspection Related

Working on tracking the number of Sprinklered buildings.

Motion to Adjourn

"It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned." Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.