Members Present: Thad Presby (Chair), Mark Hesler, Mary Grote, John Dimarzio, Keith Batchelder, and Eric Meth

Others Present: Kim Cowles, Gordie Johnk, and Tim Clough

A regular meeting of the Franconia Planning Board was held via Zoom on Tuesday, December 29, 2020.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Thad Presby.

Keith advised the Board that he has submitted his letter of resignation from the Planning Board to the Board of Selectmen effective December 31, 2020. He thanked everyone for their service and hard work, that he was honored to work with them, and wished everyone well in the future.

**7:15PM – Public Meeting, Northern Wolfpack, LLC – Application for a Wireless Telecommunications Tower Site Plan Review – 15 Main Street (Map 14, Lot 102).**

This hearing was properly noticed and all abutters were notified. Tim clough was in attendance to present this matter to the Planning Board.

Tim stated Iron Furnace Brewery is currently the hub for the Cannon Mountain leg of Mountain Top Telecom. There is a dish sitting on the far back corner of the building as you drive into the driveway of the brewery. The signal bounces off Cannon and provides the internet to Franconia, Sugar Hill, and Easton, depending on where you are geographically. What we are attempting to do is raise that up about 20 feet into a standalone meshed tower that you crank up from the ground, move that same dish over to that tower, have a better line of site over the tree line to increase the internet for the Cannon tower. This line of site in height, the estimates are that it will be able to have four times more bandwidth coming out of Cannon than we have today. It is not just because of that tower, but it’s because of the equipment upgrade that is going to be made up at Cannon because of a grant they just received. So, we want to get that tower up and improve the connectivity for the users on the Cannon tower through MTT.

Tim also stated that he did go to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) back in July or August and there was a lot of back and forth and he just didn’t fight it as hard because it was the internet; however, it has now become a point where they cannot add any new customers to that new non-profit because they just don’t have the bandwidth or equipment to support it.

Mary stated that when the Telecommunications Ordinance was developed it was designed for 150’-200’ towers that people were talking about erecting. There are newer regulations from the State of New Hampshire and the Federal Government that specify under a lot of circumstances that small projects are excluded and not to be dealt with by a Planning Board. She is concerned that the Planning Board should not be addressing this at all.

The Board reviewed the application and the checklist. Keith Batchelder made a motion to accept the application as complete, second by Thad. The motion passed unanimously.

Thad closed the public meeting and opened the public hearing.

**7:26PM – Public Hearing, Northern Wolfpack, LLC – Application for a Wireless Telecommunications Tower Site Plan Review – 15 Main Street (Map 14, Lot 102).**

Thad stated there are three key points in the application: 1) Allan Clark is calling this a structure; 2) it’s 44 feet tall, so it’s above the town zoning height limit; and 3), it doesn’t meet the building setback. The Planning Board cannot do variances, so this will need to be decided by the ZBA.

Keith stated this matter originally came to the ZBA and then the Building Inspector got involved and there were many confusing parts. However, it eventually became clear that there was this ordinance around antennas and it requires that an applicant submit an application to the Planning Board. Then if the Planning Board deems it cannot immediately pass the approval then it has to go to the ZBA which is what Thad was saying about the setback, height, and fall zone.

Tim stated that on the setback and height issues, the ZBA, if they had a quorum back in October, would have approved those. The one they couldn’t approve was the fall zone and that is when we were told we had to go to the Planning Board. The fall zone is 125% of the tower height, so 55¼’ would be the fall zone. The 55’ fall zone is the issue Allan continually said we have to go to the Planning Board to be rejected and then come to the ZBA to rule on that.

Gordie Johnk stated that at any point the school can go into remote learning and we need the best broadband possible, so it is safe to say that the school is encouraging what is best for the town. Gordie would have to take that fall zone issue up with the school board just to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

After a brief discussion, Keith Batchelder made a motion to approve the telecommunications tower conditioned on the applicant obtaining the necessary variances for setback, height restriction, and the fall zone. Second by Eric Meth. The motion passed by majority vote (5-yes, 1-abstention).

There being no further business, Thad made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Eric. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Wills