

Radford Planning Commission
Wednesday, February 20, 2019
Municipal Building

Members Present: Mr. Collier, Mr. Gillespie, Mr. Gilmore, Mr. Gropman, Dr. Pearce and Mr. Watson
Absent – Mr. Howard called in via telephone
Others Present: Melissa Skelton, City Staff

Mr. Watson called the meeting to order at 5:34 pm. A quorum was present. The agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes:
January 23, 2019

Minutes were recommended for approval by Mr. Gillespie, seconded by Dr. Pearce, with noted changes.

Mr. Gropman's absence was due to being in a concurrent city council meeting, not an ordinary absence.

Voting Yes: Mr. Collier, Mr. Gillespie, Mr. Gilmore, Dr. Pearce and Mr. Watson

Voting No: None

Abstain: Mr. Gropman

Public Address: No public comments provided.

OLD BUSINESS:

Public Hearing: Special Use Permit Request – **SP-19-001** – (1501 West Main Street)

SUMMARY: Special Use Permit Request – **SP-19-001** – (1501 West Main Street) T Preston Lloyd Jr (Attorney at Williams Mullen) on behalf of Radford Trading, LLC has submitted an application seeking approval of a Special Use Permit (SUP) for Tax Map #'s 17-(1)-1 and 17-(1)-1A, 1501 West Main Street. The SUP application proposes the use of an existing building as a facility for recycling, resource recovery and reclamation.

Mr. Tommy Bishop gave a brief presentation about the proposed activity, including a description of existing related businesses in other locations. Mr. Bishop's company purchased the site several years ago, and now they are ready to expand their business to the proposed location. The request is to allow a lower intensity use of recycling, resource recovery, and reclamation within the M-2 zoning, which previously had more intensive industrial uses.

The company's master plan includes a major processing center for insulated copper wire and similar products, as well as electronics and metal recycling. The plan may also include a public recycling center, retail and wholesale businesses, development of the property for other uses, and finding an anchor tenant for the rest of the site. The wire recycling business will entail a capital investment of \$2.5-3 million for equipment. This business is flourishing due to loss of overseas markets for the waste, creating new opportunities to recover components domestically. The initial economic impact will include creation of 4-5 new jobs that could grow to substantially more in the future.

The existing foundry site has extensive area under roof, which creates opportunities for the company's existing services to expand into other markets. The proposed use fits well with the recently adopted city comprehensive plan and is also consistent with previous uses of the site, which have rendered the site a brownfield with limited ability to remediate for other kinds of uses.

The presentation included an aerial map of the site showing specific areas and their proposed uses. The company chose Radford for multiple reasons, including available infrastructure, suitability of the site for additional complementary development, and access to local university expertise such as Virginia Tech's Center for Advanced Separation Technologies.

The wire processing operation includes integral dust collection to prevent releases of byproducts to the atmosphere. The presentation included photos of similar operations to illustrate the scope of the process. Another proposed use, electronics recycling, may also be developed here, to include retail and regional collection plus IT services and data destruction, followed by wholesale collection and in-house processing refurbishment, and remarketing. This is a favorable market niche because there are presently no R2 Certified Electronics Recyclers in southwest Virginia. The closest locations are Richmond, Hampton Roads, and northern Virginia.

Several case studies were provided based on the company's existing operations in Chilhowie, VA, to allay potential concern about the visual impact of operations. Traffic concerns were also addressed in the presentation. Mr. Bishop commented that traffic will be far less than the previous use, on the order of 2-4 tractor trailer loads per day. The rail siding could also reduce the number of trucks needed for the operation, for instance, if tolls on I-81 increase the cost of truck traffic significantly. The facility will incorporate both geographic and vegetative buffers to provide isolation for the neighboring communities and prevent noise and dust nuisances.

At tonight's meeting, the first public hearing regarding this request was opened at 6:03 pm. The following comments were provided by members of the public. A presentation to council is scheduled for February 25 at the next regular City Council meeting. March 11 will be the public hearing for City Council.

- Mr. Jesse Frazier, resident of the West End, asked how many jobs would be open to citizens in the city, versus university students. Mr. Bishop responded that initially 8-15 people would be hired. He also asked regarding potential tax breaks offered to the company. Mr. Bishop said that the company would likely apply for state tax incentives, but no local incentives were being requested.
- Mr. Crayton asked about the possible timeline for future phases. Ms. Skelton clarified that if the Special Use permit is granted, action must be taken within 18 months.
- Mr. Crayton asked about noise levels compared to previous operations. Mr. Bishop replied that while he has no scientific measurements, it's unlikely that you could hear the equipment from 100 feet away. Mr. Crayton asked regarding details of the process, and Mr. Bishop provided further description.
- Mr. Crayton asked about the amount of rail traffic. Mr. Bishop said that material would primarily be transported out from the site rather than to the site. Even though the rail may not be used initially, it provides additional flexibility for the future.

The public hearing was closed at 6:10, and the floor was open to planning commission members' questions.

Dr. Pearce asked about containment of byproducts, including the dust collection system, storage of byproducts, and loading for transportation. Mr. Bishop stated that this would be a function of the specific type of equipment used. For the shredded wire process, there have been no environmental tests of the material, and multiple similar facilities are handling it in the same way. The foundry has an existing waste building that could be used to handle this material in the same way. Some other facilities also use pneumatic systems to move the material directly to covered containers.

The company is presently permitted by DEQ in West Virginia for its current operations of this type, and those permits require that no material leave the site via stormwater runoff or airborne transport. Similar permits will be obtained for this operation. The company expects that no material would be stored outside the parcels designated under the special use permit.

Mr. Watson asked what the intent was for other buildings on site. Mr. Bishop responded that many of the buildings are not in a condition to be occupied. The company plans to clean up the existing metal waste, including buildings, as feedstock for its own recycling processes on site. Some buildings may be remediated for use, in which case they would remediate the buildings.

Mr. Watson asked about screening requirements for various parts of the parcel. If there were industrial activities adjoining residential or conservation districts, there would be screening requirements that had to be met. Ms. Skelton clarified the ordinance requirements. Mr. Bishop described the proposed landscaping and existing buffers that will be included around the operations.

Mr. Collier asked about scrap storage on the site. Mr. Bishop described the company's plans to conduct operations inside the building rather than outside to the maximum extent possible, to limit environmental exposure. The aim is to not allow material to accumulate on site, but rather transport it in, process it, and transport it out.

Mr. Gropman asked about hours of operation. Mr. Bishop stated that the initial plan is one shift during normal hours, but that shifts might expand to round-the-clock depending on availability of material. These shifts would occur inside the building and would not involve truck traffic or commercial/retail activity at night. Mr. Gropman asked for a description of the different types of metals that could potentially be part of the recycling stream. Mr. Bishop stated that electronics would typically be collected, separated, and then shipped to other processors. The company does not want to deal with hazardous waste on this site, so they would treat all electronics in terms of keeping it classified as universal waste. This would involve not disassembling or processing electronics at this site with hazardous components, but rather separating them and shipping them elsewhere for processing. The most likely component materials to be handled at this site would include plastics, wiring, and circuit boards. More complex products would be shipped elsewhere.

Mr. Gropman said that since there are no other processors west of Richmond, he had concerns about the volume of material that might potentially be attracted here, making it difficult to keep all storage and operations under roof. Mr. Bishop described the expected process and why it would not be a good idea to store materials outside from an environmental exposure standpoint. He also stated that to a large extent, volume of recyclables is a function of freight/transport, and so it's likely to be self-limiting in terms of the catchment area for potential materials.

Mr. Gropman asked whether there would be collection points for residents or other local producers. Mr. Bishop anticipates having both a retail and residential collection point at some point as well as working with local waste authorities to accept their electronic waste. Mr. Bishop stated that there might be a cost for accepting some items, and some items might not be accepted. There would not be an uncontrolled collection point at this location.

Mr. Gropman asked about the company's plan regarding brownfield cleanup. Mr. Bishop stated that the company plans to comply with all DEQ requirements for site disturbance to avoid creating additional problems. Building sites are not considered part of the contamination since they are under cover with concrete foundations, which allows the company to conduct operations inside.

Mr. Gropman asked about requiring trucks coming in to be tarped. Mr. Bishop stated that this is not a requirement. Wholesale purchases will most likely come to the site in box trailers, and there may also be some baled materials or loose materials. Transporters must meet DOT requirements that are intended to contain loose materials.

Mr. Watson asked about the timing of when the planning commission makes its recommendation. Mr. Howard stated that there could be an official recommendation as soon as tonight.

ACTION: Mr. Collier made a motion to recommend to council that the SUP be approved as provided, seconded by Mr. Gilmore. A roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Collier – yes
Mr. Gillespie – yes
Mr. Gilmore – yes
Mr. Gropman – yes
Dr. Pearce – yes
Mr. Watson – yes

Based on the outcome of the vote, the commission recommendation passed as stated.

NEW BUSINESS:

SUMMARY: (3080 Little River Dam Road) Islands on the New, LLC submitted an application seeking approval of a Special Use Permit (SUP) for Tax Map #'s 24-1-8, 3080 Little River Dam Road, Radford VA. The request is to allow construction and operation of a recreational vehicle park.

Mr. Tony Landrith, the property owner, described the project and took questions from the planning commission. Michael Gay, an engineer with Gay & Neal, designed the original park and has worked with the property for 20 years. He is now working with the owner to bring the project forward. During that time, the RV industry has come a long way, and over time, the expectations for such a park have evolved as well.

All sites will be connected to public water and sewer, and there will also be a dump station for people wishing to empty their tanks. Each site will also have electricity. The site is in a flood plain, so none of the structures would be permanent or have accessory structures associated with them. There is a 180 day limit for stays at facilities like this, so no semi-permanent structures will be constructed (such as decks).

Mr. Gilmore asked about the number of bathhouses. There are 2-3 planned. The existing house is planned to remain. It is presently rented, but in future could serve as housing for a groundskeeper for the facility.

Mr. Gilmore noted that entrance to the site would be a challenge off Little River Road for vehicles towing 30' trailers. He also wondered about the revisions to Exit 105 and how that would affect the ability to access the chart. Mr. Gay noted that the project site is completely outside the boundary of the interstate project.

Mr. Watson stated that the example lot layout is a pull-through design, but this could be difficult given the proposed site layout in the conceptual design. Mr. Landrith noted that the layout was intended to protect some of the site's green space and other assets.

Mr. Gropman asked about potential sewage contamination in the event of flooding. Mr. Gay described the physical connections used and how they are capped to prevent leakage. The site will have its own pump

station to move sewage to the wastewater plant. All wastewater will be contained in a closed system. Bathhouses are designed to survive a 100-year flood and can be easily cleaned following flooding. The common areas for the park will be located near the road.

Dr. Pearce asked about views from the river of the development. Mr. Landrith stated that you will be able to see campers, but the lowest tier of the grounds will be preserved, with higher tiers being where vehicles are located. Campers will find river views desirable, so providing that view will be an important part of the facility's appeal. While some trees will be removed, valuable trees in decent shape will be preserved to the extent possible.

Mr. Gropman asked about how RVs would be moved if the owner was there for an extended stay but not present when a flood occurred. Mr. Landrith replied that there would be provisions and requirements for the owner to be responsible for moving their own vehicle. AEP provides flood notifications in this area, so visitors would have ample warning of the need to move their vehicles. There would likely be specific waivers and requirements for owners that allows the manager of the facility to tow the vehicles out of the flood plain.

Mr. Watson asked whether there could be people who circumvent the 180 day limit by moving to another location on the site. Mr. Landrith replied that this is not the intent of the site, and it's unlikely that this is the sort of client to be attracted to the site. In general, it's difficult to find short term camping space along the river. Many of the existing camping sites are for long term use only, so this project will provide for people looking for short term opportunities.

ACTION: A motion was made by Dr. Pearce, seconded by Mr. Gropman, to schedule a planning commission public hearing for their March 18 meeting and request that City Council schedule a public hearing for the March 25 meeting.

Voting Yes: Mr. Collier, Mr. Gillespie, Mr. Gilmore, Mr. Gropman, Dr. Pearce and Mr. Watson

Voting No: None

Abstain: None

Staff Report: No report was provided.

COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Collier – Echoes Dr. Pearce's comments

Mr. Gillespie – Very pleased with the projects we heard about tonight.

Mr. Gilmore – Echoes the comments of other commissioners

Mr. Gropman – Echoes the comments of other commissioners

Dr. Pearce – Excited to see the new possibilities for development along our riverfront, and kudos to the presenters for taking care to preserve environmental assets of the sites.

Mr. Watson – Agrees with other commissioners.

Mr. Howard – No comment.

A motion was made by Mr. Gilmore to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 pm, seconded by Mr. Gillespie.

Voting Yes: Mr. Collier, Mr. Gillespie, Mr. Gilmore, Mr. Gropman, Dr. Pearce and Mr. Watson

Voting No: None

Abstain: None

Submitted by: A. Pearce, Secretary

Date: _____ 2019

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