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**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
February 21, 2008**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mark Thibeault (Chairman); Liza Kilcoyne, Diane Clemens, Dan Kerin, Andrew Boutin.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Jeff Arango, Developer Director.

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**1. CALL TO ORDER and AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS**

Chairman Mark Thibeault called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Frank Naef, 4 Park Terrace

Frank Naef discussed three potential development scenarios for his property at 4 Park Terrace in the Village Center District. Mr. Naef wants to add seven to eight units to the existing house site. Scenarios include creating a duplex in the existing house and adding two buildings to the rear of the lot with three units and four units respectively. The buildings would be one-and-a-half or two-story buildings staying in character with the neighborhood. Another option is decreasing the number of units in the new buildings by one in order to attain the required 20' separation from the property line. A third option is to add the units to the existing building and increase the building height to three stories. Jeff Arango clarified his comments to Mr. Naef about multiple buildings on a lot not being supported by the Planning Commission were relative to the established and strong neighborhood pattern around Mr. Naef's house which is in a state registered district. Adding buildings has the potential to disrupt the character of the area, but this would depend on how the buildings are designed. There is design review in the district. Adding onto existing structures with the front of the original building unchanged and fronting the street has been done successfully in Burlington. This approach maintains the character of the neighborhood. A three story building would dominate the area, stated Jeff Arango, although there is existing vegetation and screening in the backyard so the structure may not be so visible. It was noted the existing one-and-a-half story house is tall with a steep roof. The adjacent residence is almost a story taller because of its location on the hill. There was further discussion of the proposed development scenarios. Most of the houses in the neighborhood are multi-family. There is no restriction on lot coverage in the Village Center District. The Planning Commission has discretion in the Village Center District with regard to the buffer area. There was mention of potential future

development in the area (five story hotel). The consensus of the Planning Commission is in support of development that maintains the main house and the character of the area.

Dave Crawford: Village Manager

The new Village Manager, Dave Crawford, introduced himself to the Planning Commission.

**2. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA**

None.

**3. MINUTES**

*January 17, 2008*

**MOTION by Dan Kerin, SECOND by Liza Kilcoyne, to approve the 1/17/08 minutes with the following corrections:**

**Page 1, Janice Riordan Application, Staff Report, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, 8<sup>th</sup> sentence – delete the word “cost” in the words “cost deed description” and delete the words “the deed language”.**

**VOTING: 5 ayes; motion carried.**

**4. PUBLIC MEETING**

Mark Thibeault explained the procedure to be following with applications before the Planning Commission and swore in those individuals to give testimony.

Reconsideration of sketch and final plan for a two lot subdivision at 1 Birch Lane in the R-1 District by Janice M. Riordan, owner

MOTION by Liza Kilcoyne, SECOND by Diane Clemens, to reopen the hearing on the application for 1 Birch Lane VOTING: 5 ayes; motion carried.

Janice Riordan and John Alden appeared on behalf of the application.

**STAFF REPORT**

Jeff Arango stated notices were mailed to all abutting property owners about the reconsideration hearing. The property owner submitted a revised survey and asked that the Planning Commission reconsider the denial of the application on 1/17/08. The jog of land behind 23 & 25 Mansfield Ave. has been shortened from 100'x 20' to 50'x 24'. The lot size is 16,285 s.f. which is 1,285 s.f. greater than the minimum lot size requirement. There is a five foot strip of land which has unclear ownership. The surveyor felt it best to

leave the land in the lot size calculation. Two potential house designs have been submitted by the applicant. John Alden did the design to fit on the lot and be compatible with houses in the neighborhood. It was noted Birch Lane is a private street regulated by a homeowners association or cooperative agreement by the residents on the street. The minimum size of the roadway for a private street is 20' to allow for two-way traffic. The Planning Commission can impose conditions on a private street (i.e. no parking on the street) as part of a project approval. The width of Birch Lane is 14'. The right-of-way is 20' wide. Jeff Arango noted having a 20' wide street serving only a few houses is a wide street.

## APPLICANT COMMENTS

Janice Riordan explained the house designs which fit with the neighborhood. The new house would be along Mansfield Ave. The lot is not as irregular as it seems per the tax maps.

There was discussion of the paved portion of the right-of-way (Birch Lane) being used for parking. Mark Thibeault stated he witnessed four or five cars parked on the road during his visits to the site. Janice Riordan said Carlton Walcott, a neighbor on Birch Lane, has two basement apartments in his house plus his primary residence. The tenants park on the road, but this is not a problem for the neighbors. Mr. Walcott's house and the apartments are not typical of the single family houses in the area. Mark Thibeault questioned how Mr. Walcott got approval for the apartments if there was not space on his property for parking. This matter needs to be resolved. Janice Riordan noted parking is not an issue with her property, either the existing house or the proposed house. Mr. Thibeault clarified the issue is adding more cars decreases the efficiency of the roadway. The proposal will add another residence (and more cars) on a road that has a standing problem. Mr. Thibeault pointed out the site plan does not reflect the actual amount of paving.

Regarding the character of the neighborhood and the proposed layout, Mr. Thibeault stated in his observations most of the houses in the area are one-and-a-half stories with a driveway and 30' or more on each side. The houses are well spaced except for one house. Ms. Riordan asked if a better layout would be having the proposed house located closer to the existing house on Birch Lane, though the application and discussion is about a subdivision, not a building. Liza Kilcoyne pointed out there are examples of houses located closer together creating a village like neighborhood. Jeff Arango noted there are houses within eight feet of the property line. There was further discussion of the space between houses as viewed from an aerial photograph versus actual observation.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

Amy White, 5 Birch Lane, testified she had no problem with the proposal.

Dave Crawford, Village Manager, opined the Planning Commission likely does have the ability to apply conditions that involve the private road. Also, a quick claim arrangement

for the five foot strip of land may be a solution. Janice Riordan agreed a quick claim is a good idea.

There were no further comments.

MOTION by Mark Thibeault, SECOND by Liza Kilcoyne, to close the public portion of the subdivision proposal for 1 Birch Lane. VOTING: 5 ayes; motion carried.

#### DELIBERATION/DECISION

##### Sketch and Final Plan, Two Lot Subdivision, 1 Birch Street, Janice Riordan

There was discussion of the layout, the five foot strip of land, the width of the road and access to the proposed house from Birch Lane or Mansfield Ave.

MOTION by Liza Kilcoyne, SECOND by Andrew Boutin, to approve the sketch and final plan for a two lot subdivision at 1 Birch Lane with the following conditions:

1. Easement documents shall be provided to the Village Office and approved by staff prior to being recorded in the land records.
2. The plat shall be revised to show eight foot easements on all side and rear lot lines for future drainage and utility purposes.
3. The Village may require site modifications on Lot 2 if drainage problem result from future development.
4. There shall be no parking on Birch Lane or within the right-of-way.
5. The driveway to the new house shall be off Birch Lane to the rear of the house.

VOTING: 4 ayes, 1 nay (Thibeault); motion carried.

#### 5. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

None.

#### 6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Dan Kerin, SECOND by Liza Kilcoyne, to adjourn the meeting. VOTING: 5 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

*RScty: M.E.Riordan*

