

Town of Canton Planning Board

Meeting Minutes

July 10, 2023

Municipal Courtroom - 60 Main Street, Canton

6:00pm

Members Present

Chairperson Ian MacKellar, Betsy Hodge, William Myers, Eric Barr, Dakota Casserly (alternate), Sigie Barr (alternate)

Members Absent

John Casserly

Others Present

Code Enforcement Officer Michael McQuade; Applicant Jeffery Beri (No Dogs Left Behind); Tomi Beri (No Dogs Left Behind); Owner Deb Bridges (Maple Ridge Kennels); Owner Styles Bridges (Maple Ridge Kennels); Applicant Counsel Lisa Weaver (Zoom); Applicant Counsel Lauren Baron (Zoom); Resident Ruta Ozols; Resident Margaret Mauch; Resident Leslie Clark; Sean Brynda (WWNY 7 News); Tom Graser (Watertown Daily Times); Paul Mitchell (North Country This Week)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by chairperson Ian MacKellar.

Meeting Minutes

The following corrections were made to the meeting minutes from March 6, 2023:

- Attribute the comment regarding the capacity available on the grid for solar to Counsel Bill Buchan.

A motion was made by Bill Myers to approve the meeting minutes from March 6, 2023 as corrected above; the motion was seconded by Betsy Hodge. All in favor, motion carried.

The following corrections were made to the meeting minutes from June 5, 2023:

- Correct the spelling of resident Cathy Shrady's last name.
- On page 3, the comments regarding the lease arrangement and liability of the No Dogs Left Behind project were made by Board members and should be moved to a new line to avoid confusion.
- The No Dogs Left Behind project was registered with the department of Agriculture and Markets to run a shelter, not licensed.

A motion was made by Betsy Hodge to approve the meeting minutes from June 5, 2023 as corrected above; the motion was seconded by Eric Barr. All in favor, motion carried.

Agenda Items

1. Old Business
 - a. Status update of proposed project at 1734 State Highway 68, Canton (No Dogs Left Behind, Inc.)

A new application has been submitted to the Town Planning Board by the operator, Jeffrey Beri; and the owners of the facility, Debra & Styles Bridges. This application is for a site plan review only.

- A number of comments were offered regarding the application and existing comments and concerns regarding the project by owner Debra Bridges:
 - The application is presented by owners Debra and Styles Bridges, and Mr. Jeffrey Beri, operator.
 - The intention for services at this time is as follows:
 - They are adding sanctuary/shelter services to their current services as a kennel.
 - The term “sanctuary” has caused some concern; these are short-term placements and not intended to be permanent.
 - This will exist as a shelter, and the vast majority of dogs will be adopted out.
 - The project is registered properly as a shelter with the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, and they have to meet and/or exceed all requirements and standards imposed by the state.
 - They currently have 60 runs located on site; these are intended to be single-occupancy although they can hold 2-3 animals on a short-term or emergency basis, dependent on size and temperament.
 - The plan calls for no more than 150 dogs on site at any given time.
 - At this time no additional buildings have been added or proposed, and they maintain the existing kennel, exercise yard, and a small horse barn that has runs in it.
 - All buildings are fully enclosed and soundproofed.
 - All the dogs on site are kept inside during the hours required by code.
 - There may be consideration for expansion in the future, at which time improved buildings, sound abatement, and capacity increases could be implemented.
 - It was noted that drainage for the location is not an issue.
 - The owners and operator are making efforts to address all issues that have been raised to date.
 - They have been asked why they are working with dogs internationally; however Mrs. Bridges noted that they are also working with the local animal shelter and have “basically eliminated the euthanasia at that location.” They have also been working with local vet techs and the community with the intent of improving care and capacity in the area.
 - A set procedure is followed by the staff every day, and the dogs are exercised on a schedule which results in happy and tired dogs.
 - They continue to provide boarding services, and their boarding customers have been very happy.
 - The treatment and immunizations required for the dogs that are brought on site is well above what is generally required; it was stated that the federal government has indicated to the organization that their process are above and beyond the requirements.
 - Regarding escaped animals, Mrs. Bridges noted that no dangerous animal would ever be put in a situation where it would be capable of escape. The recent situation with escaped huskies and the comment that they should not be approached was not because the animals were dangerous, but rather they would

be frightened and therefore unpredictable. It is a common request to ask the public not to approach escaped dogs for this reason.

- The septic system remains the same as it was under the previous kennel operation; with higher capacity they will be pumping the system more often.
 - This system is currently pumped out three times a year, but will be done based on the population on the premises.
 - Animal waste is also managed on a constant basis as staff cleans continuously throughout the day and are on premises 24 hours a day.
 - It was noted that all buildings contain drains to the septic system, and although a leachfield is in place the intent is to keep the system sufficiently pumped out that no runoff would occur.
- Mrs. Bridges noted that the project would happily complete any required reports; however she feels that a SEQR would not be appropriate in this scenario as it would not apply in a situation of a farm with far more animals on premises.
- The project's hours of operation are 8am-7pm, and they are cautious of noise issues.
 - It was noted that no dog is ever left outside on its own.
 - She also stated that there is no indication of any increase in noise from the previous operation.
- Board members posed questions to the applicants:
 - Dakota Casserly asked about the historical capacity of the kennel and if it has always held 60 runs.
 - It was responded that some of the runs have been expanded but that the historical capacity has always been around 50-60.
 - The historical density of animals on the property was stated to be an average of 20-30 at a time, with an increase to 90+ dogs during the busiest times and random weekends running 6-10 dogs.
 - The customer list for Maple Ridge Kennels ran over 200 customers.
 - The current number of dogs on site is about 70.
 - At this time Mr. Bridges also noted that he has spent a significant sum of money on noise abatement measures.
 - Mr. Casserly also asked what the usual capacity for a run is.
 - It was clarified that these are intended to be single-occupancy, but can hold 2-3 dogs together temporarily depending on size and temperament.
 - Ian MacKellar asked about the planned veterinary services as noted on the application.
 - At this time there are no plans to offer a public veterinary clinic, but they are in talks to have veterinary services available to the animals on site.
 - The facility does keep medication on site as prescribed by a vet.
 - Mr. MacKellar noted that if a veterinary clinic were to be opened to the public, the facility would need to be owned by the veterinarian offering services.
 - Based on the discussion, it was determined that the veterinary service part of the application would be removed.
 - Mr. MacKellar also noted that it appeared the sanitation issue had been satisfactorily addressed, but asked about the plan for managing deceased animals.
 - Mr. Beri stated that cremation would be utilized for deceased animals, and an arrangement would be made for off-site services with a vet clinic for this. Mr. MacKellar reminded the applicant that this should be addressed as soon as possible so a plan is in place.

- It was noted that the application mentions local adoption events; at this time the applicants noted that they have been working through the permitting process and have not made any plans for an event locally but plan to do so once all approvals are in place.
- Mr. MacKellar asked about the noted public use of the dog park on the premises. It was noted that this is currently available to their boarding customers.
- The board asked about the collaboration with local shelters.
 - Mr. Beri noted that the facility is currently not taking in any additional animals from Asia, so has been working with a local shelter to assist in adopting out their animals. Their intent is to continue working with the shelter with the highest euthanasia rate.
- Eric Barr asked about the adoption expectation for the 70 dogs currently on site.
 - Mr. Beri noted that there are no animals specifically spoken for; however they had 5 dogs adopted out over the last weekend and their average movement is 3-5 dogs every 5-10 days.
 - Mr. Barr also asked about the adoption process; Mr. Beri noted that the application is available online and dogs are promoted on social media for adoption. Interested parties can drive to Canton for pick up or arrange for pickup at JFK airport. He noted that they have a very strict screening process, and they also utilize foster homes for animals awaiting adoption.
- Mr. Jeffery Beri noted the following information:
 - There is staffing all day long at the facility, and the dogs are always attended.
 - Current staff levels are 2 people during the day and 1 person at night.
 - The fencing is all double paneled and buildings are fully enclosed.
 - The boarding services will remain available to the community along with the rescue facility.
 - 3-5 spaces are currently kept available for boarding.
 - They have only had one week so far where they couldn't accommodate boarding.
 - The adoption rate for the sheltered dogs is very high and the animals move through the facility very quickly.
 - Dogs only remain at the location for around 3-5 weeks and are adopted out around the country and around the world.
 - Mr. Beri encouraged the members of the Town Planning Board to visit and see the facility in person.
- Discussion was had regarding the next steps in the application process.
 - The next step would be a public hearing for the application, which would be recommended for the next planned Town Planning Board meeting in August.
 - Dakota Casserly noted that due to the complications with the current proposed land use regulations in the update to the Town Code which has not yet been adopted by the Town Board, this application remains under the regulations of the current code.
 - This preapplication process is still required under the new code should it be adopted.
 - The process should continue toward the public hearing proposed for August.
 - Counsel for the applicant Lisa Weaver made several comments over Zoom but due to connection issues, chairperson MacKellar requested that an email be sent to him noting her comments for the record.

A motion was made by Bill Myers to hear from any members of the public who would like to comment on the proposed project. The motion was seconded by Betsy Hodge. Three members voted in favor, one

voted against, and the motion passed. Chairperson MacKellar reminded members of the public to keep their comments to three minutes maximum, and only offer new information that would not already been on the record from previous comments submitted in person or in writing. No public comment was offered, and public comment was closed.

2. New Business

a. Other

- i. Code Enforcement Officer Michael McQuade noted that he has been contacted by Collier Engineering out of Rochester who will be serving as the engineer for two potential solar projects at 268 SH 310 East and 268 SH 310 West. The solar company proposing the project is NexAmp. At this time no plans have been submitted and no official information has been received.
 - The Planning Board held a brief discussion about the upcoming changes to the land use regulations and how that may affect this proposal.
 - Dakota Casserly noted that he intends to submit a letter to the Land Use Committee regarding recommendations for solar projects around the Village limits; several Planning Board members asked that he send his letter to them for potential to add their signatures.
- ii. Mr. McQuade noted that a new biodigester law proposal has been finalized and will be submitted to the Town Board for inclusion in the new zoning regulations.
 - He will send a copy of this proposal to the Planning Board for their information.
- iii. Mr. McQuade also attended a walkthrough of a sheep grazing operation on a solar farm in Canada and noted that he was glad he was able to go and learn more about the process.
- iv. Bill Myers asked about the potential for officially adding a public comment process to the Planning Board's procedure for all meetings instead of just public hearings.
 - It was noted that the Town Board has a process for this, and it will be shared with the Planning Board for consideration.Mr. Myers made a motion to change the Planning Board's standard operating procedure to follow those of the Town Board in reference to public comment at meetings. As information will be provided to the members of the Planning Board regarding this process in the next few days, this motion was tabled to the August meeting and will be added to the agenda.
- v. Dakota Casserly made a note of thanks to chairperson MacKellar and CEO McQuade for sharing public comments received by email and other communications with the Planning Board.

Next Meetings

Upcoming meetings of the Town Planning Board are tentatively scheduled as follows:

- August 7, 2023 at 6:00pm

This meeting will be held in the boardroom of the municipal building at 60 Main Street, Canton. The option to participate remotely will be made possible by way of Zoom Virtual Meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Eric Barr; the motion was seconded by Bill Myers and carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:08pm.

Date: July 14, 2023

Jeni Reed
Recording Secretary