Four-story development proposed for Portsmouth Avenue in Exeter

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EXETER — A four-story development containing a bank, medical offices and residential units has been proposed for the lot adjacent to McDonald's at 146 Portsmouth Avenue.

Seacoast Shearwater Development, LLC received approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment on Jan. 17 for the estimated 18,250 square-foot building in the C2 highway commercial zoning district. In 2013, a plan was put together for the vacant property, approved by the Planning Board but never built. John Salin, president of Seacoast Shearwater, has returned with a proposal he said is at "the midway location of the interstate system" between Boston and Maine.

The ZBA approved a special exception to allow a multi-use building that includes commercial and residential, and granted a special exception to allow the building height to reach up to 50 feet.

Salin said the plan currently includes four residential units on the fourth floor that may range between 1,000 and 1,150 square-feet in size.

"There is a very strong market that's being unattended to," Salin said. He noted "plenty" of luxury housing and single-family homes in the area, but not enough options for "single parents and people making between $40,000 and $50,000 a year."

"This is a great building to test that market with," Salin said. Salin said the residential units will have a balcony overlooking the property's wetlands. The proposal also received approval from its wetlands application.

The proposal is headed to the Planning Board next, which approved the project in the preliminary stages back in 2013.

"When it rains it pours when it comes to economic development and all of the town's efforts to attract commercial ventures and streamline the planning process

are paying off," said Economic Development Director Darren Winham. "This project is a great fit for Portsmouth Avenue right at the gateway off Route 101. We're very appreciative to Mr. Salin and his team for making this investment."