

Minutes Planning Board, August 2, 2012

Present: Diane Poland (Chair), Joe Strzegowski, Kate Eugin-Moore, and David Barten. Rick Bean (Selectboard liaison) was also present. Absent: Mike Kurkolonis. Presenters: Bob Armstrong, Glen Cardinal and Riva Reck.

The meeting began at 7:00 pm. There were seven agenda items, number five being a presentation about Wired West, scheduled for 7:30 to 8:00.

(1) Minutes—the revised draft minutes for the meeting of July 19 were amended. Item (4), second paragraph, should read: “Joe, as Conway’s rep to FRCOG’s regional planning board, reported on a meeting he attended, where he learned that the agency suggests Town Planning Boards take wireless into account in their bylaws . He was informing the board.”

The word “Thus” at the beginning of the next paragraph was struck out.

The motion was made and seconded to accept the revised draft as amended.

(2) Planning Board procedures—Dianne suggested that because the Board has so much to talk about members should speak in turn, should avoid cross-talk, and not interrupt each other.

(3) Fall Schedule of presentations--

Diane said that while the master plan was not listed for discussion at this meeting, at the next meeting, twenty minutes should be set aside during which each member can say what she/ he thinks about it. A special meeting should then be scheduled where the members focus on the plan. It was agreed that we do not want to sign off on the plan, because it needs some tweaking. Rick said that a plan would be useful but does not have to be a blueprint that solves all outstanding issues. It was pointed out that such a work session would have to be posted as an open meeting.

Diane handed out a sheet titled “Conway Planning Board Scope of Responsibility”. She said that the members should look it over, and we will focus on it at another meeting.

The upcoming presentations, and dates are:

September 6, the Garage Committee, and also Peggy Sloan, FRCOG rep who specializes in bylaws.

September 20, Parks and Rec

Rick, who is liaison to Parks and Rec, said that there is a possibility that the Committee could get a grant for a large portion of the money needed to do all it wants to do to upgrade the recreation field. Weston & Sampson, engineers, are doing a write up for the committee, in preparation for applying for the grant.

Buckland Waste Treatment site visit was not scheduled, nor was a Senior Housing Committee presentation.

Rick as liaison to Senior Housing said he had just heard a presentation before the committee that described how members have a monumental task ahead in coming up with a plan; it would take years before an actual proposal could be put forward. Diane suggested that Senior Housing be removed from the presentation list, thereby allowing time to schedule pole hearings when, as might happen, the Board is petitioned for permission to add new poles or move existing ones.

(4) Groundwater assessment—Diane had done some research on the matter of determining where the aquifers underlying the Town are located and their size. There are two ways to research this, one being a paper analysis, through study of Town records about springs and wells, the aim being to determine the depth and flows of each. A study of this kind conducted by professionals is much cheaper than the second, which also involves professional study of each spring and well at a cost of \$2,000 per well. Both Joe and Rick pointed to Ginny Knowlton, Clerk of the Board of Health, as the person to approach about well records.

Joe thought that it would be important to identify where aquifers were located, because from a town planning point of view, this was information the Board should know.

David had pursued the existence of the Sinclair Water Works, which presumably the Town owns. He described what he had learned to date, which is that an Alexander Sinclair had taken control early in the 20th century of a spring-fed cistern atop the hill above the French and Hardigg houses, and had charged residents in Burkeville for supplying water. He could not find deeds showing that Sinclair's son, who seemed

to have inherited the works, had ever sold it to the Town. Joe thought that the Town might have taken it for failure to pay taxes. David said he'd look into this possibility.

(5) WiredWest presentation— The presenters were Bob Armstrong, Conway's rep to the Cooperative; Glen Cardinal from Buckland, who has just been nominated to the executive committee; and Riva Reck from Warwick, co-chair of the executive committee. From the point of view of the Planning Board, there were several matters that needed addressing. First was to distinguish between MBI with its on-going effort to extend fiber optic service to CAIs or Cable Anchor Institutions, and Wired West and its efforts to bring high speed broadband service to rural communities in Western Massachusetts.

The MBI operation was created with \$45.4 million two years ago from federal stimulus funds and has one year left in which to extend cables into more than a hundred towns. And as it happens, MBI is already well along in its effort. In July 2011, it began to create a "huge 'middle mile' network bringing broadband to approx. 1300 'community access institutions' across 124 towns in Western Mass." These consist of municipal and public facilities. This network means all towns would be wired to each other, but only in public access facilities. Mass law prevents MBI from linking these CAIs to private business and residences. Because of this, the race is on among private servers to make the connections between CAIs and private entities.

Conway has been wired by MBI, and the cables and boxes are in place; it also has Comcast and Verizon which have their own cables and serve about half of Conway's residents. Thus, it is the remaining residents and businesses who are targets for providers who want to link them to the CAIs in town, and also those who might be unhappy with the products offered by Comcast and Verizon.

WiredWest, in contrast, is a co-operative expecting shortly to have forty-two member towns, which have voted to have the co-operative bring high speed broad-band service to residences and businesses in the towns. Whereas MBI was funded by the federal government, Wired West, on the strength of the number of committed member towns has received \$133,000 in grants and another \$161,000 in donated services. At the end of 2012, the co-op expects to seek investment funding specifically to construct a fiber optic network to serve those residences

and businesses in member towns which both Comcast and Verizon will not, because it is not cost-effective for them to do so. The product WiredWest proposes is “comprehensive , affordable, reliable and high-quality internet, telephone, television and ancillary services to all the residents, businesses and institutions of WiredWest towns.”

The fact that WiredWest is still a work in progress, and is only now about to undertake an engineering study of its member towns to determine the cost of bringing cable to specific residences, means that the co-op does not yet know the exact number of poles and amount of cable it will need to reach residences and businesses in the member towns. Therefore WiredWest does not know yet know the total amount it will have to raise; money-raising will begin once the engineering study is completed at the end of 2012.

The second matter the Board wanted the presenters to address was how many new poles Wired West would need in Conway. The presenters’ response was that the number will be determined by the engineers conducting the survey of all the towns.

The presenters made clear that WEMCO and VERIZON own poles in Conway, usually jointly, and that it was likely that Wired West could use some of them to string its own cables. The process for getting permission from the utilities did not require approaching the Selectmen or the Planning board. Only if new poles were needed, or if existing poles were too far apart, would WiredWest have to erect poles, and petition the Planning Board for permission. In the event poles were needed, it those in Conway who were WiredWest subscribers who would share the cost of erecting them, no money being asked of the Town.

Because the meeting was running late, Diane suggested it come to an end. All members of the Committee agreed, and the meeting ended at 8:45, and so items (6) and (7), Bylaws and Burkeville development proposals, were not addressed.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 16, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

David Barten, clerk

