

Minutes, Planning board meeting, January 3rd, 2013

Present: Diane Poland (Chair), Joe Strzegowski (by speaker phone), Mike Kurkulonis and David Barten. Absent: Kate Eugin-Moore. Presenters: David Scott Barker and Sue Bridge.

The meeting began at 7:00 pm as posted. There were four items on the agenda:

(1) Subdivision—David Scott Barker of 1733 Roaring Brook Road was not scheduled to appear before the Board, but because he was present and ready to do business, Diane made his presentation the first item.

Mr. Barker placed before the members a surveyor's map showing how two acres was going to be separated off from a very much larger parcel that is owned by his wife's family. The land will be sold to a neighbor whose own land abuts the two-acre parcel. The land in questions lies on the easterly side of South Part Road.

Because Conway does not have subdivision control, the proposed change did not have to be brought before the Planning Board. Both Mr. Barker and the members were aware of this, and both noted that the gesture was an act of courtesy, and for this reason the members would give Mr. Barker the time needed to present the proposed plan and would sign the surveyor's drawings. Since Mr. Baker and his wife live on Roaring Brook Road, near Mike's own property, Mike took the lead in asking questions. There being no reason to advise against the planned division of property, the members signed the several drawings.

(2) Master plan—As scheduled, Sue Bridge was present to discuss her suggestions about how the draft MP could be improved.

In sum, Sue would make two basic improvements. First, she would make the plan readable—no redundancies and no abstractions. The MP should be clear and straightforward like a well-written business plan.

Second, she would adjust the plan to take into account the future of the Town as it looks from today in 2013. The plan, created in 2005, was conceived when the population was climbing rapidly and there was a perceived threat on the part of residents who responded to the MP committee's questionnaire that development would displace open space. Sue thought this fear was no longer justified, because growth of the town's population has peaked and no significant growth is likely to occur in the future.

Sue proposed that the MP, in contrast, should address directly the matter of sustainability given the clear indication that climate is changing, and that energy efficiency, water security, health, food supply, emergency preparedness, etc. are all issues that now need attention, not just by Conway's Planning Board, but the boards in all the small towns of the region. FRCOG has been active in trying to get the towns in Franklin County to focus on these issues.

Sue's revised MP plan would be organized in the following way:

(a) Executive Summary;

(b) Conway: Past and Present;

(c) Goals;

(d) Planning in Uncertain Times;

(e) Policies—as listed—Land use plan. Housing. Education and human resource development. Energy security. Food Security. Water Security. Transportation. Public health, public safety, emergency management. Environmental protection: soil, water, plants, wildlife.

(f) 5-year Objectives (FY2014- FY2018)—specifics

--Town's Protective Bylaw revised to permit cluster housing,

--Twenty elder and low-income housing units built,

--Fifty homes winterized for residents of modest means,

--Municipal sewer system built for Town center,

--Municipal garage built,

--Town hall insulated and remodeled,

--xx gigawatt solar 'farm' sited and installed,

--Organized promotion of local and regional food security,

--Organization of sustainable farming and forestry practices,

--Conway water supply needs and options clarified.

(g) Appendixes (these were listed)

The discussion between Sue and the members followed the outline. We summarize several discussions.

In general, there was agreement that the preservation of land in the draft MP needs to be deemphasized. given the change in pace of population growth, and that sustainability should be the focus.

To this end, housing in various forms needs to be addressed—cluster in back lots, retrofitting existing old homes, dividing larger single-family homes into two apartments.

There needs to be a focus on how young people who have been born and raised in Conway can stay in the town, finding both employment and housing here. Mike said that while residents might shudder at the thought, he thinks there should be an industrial park, sized and designed to fit Conway's situation, where young people could be employed in the several businesses that might operate in it.

As for water security, Sue said she had been able to get from Katherine Skiba (DEP) four maps that together provide some information about Conway's water situation—but not about aquifers, which is the Board's real interest, since these in general have never been identified.

The seniors, whose numbers constitute one third of the town's population, need to be given greater attention, especially since their numbers are increasing as residents grow older, and enabled to live longer lives. The topic of transportation as it relates to the elderly led to the idea that Conway might own a van and employ a full-time driver. The Town would provide daily trips, possibly twice a day to Greenfield and surrounding towns for seniors needing transportation. Such a service would be an acknowledgement that seniors, whose taxes support the education of the young people in the grammar and high schools, should, in return, be provided something by the Town, which would be as useful to them as education is to the young.

When Diane brought the discussion to an end, Sue proposed that the next step in revising the draft MP be to involve the members of the Board. She will write a quick revised draft and submit it for the members' response.

(4) January 10th meeting—Diane proposed that the meeting have the following form. At the outset, she will describe the reason for the meeting: (a) the aim-- to try to reach a consensus about the future use of the Rose property; (b) the role of the Planning Board—to be an objective moderator in seeking the pros and cons about the several proposals for use of the property.

Joe will moderate the discussion, which will include presentations by those parties having vested interest in the property, and brainstorming about how the property might best be used. Diane will act as scribe, writing on large sheets of paper so all can see both suggestions and pros and cons as Joe draws them from the participants.

David, as clerk, will write the minutes for the meeting, since it is a posted open meeting of the Planning Board.

As for supplies and people needed, Joe will get schematics of the Rose property from Stirling Hubbard. Mike will get maps of various kinds. David will get a large newsprint pad and an easel on which to put it, as well as large pieces of paper to be hung from the cork board in the common room. He will also get a supply of "Sharpies" for writing.

Diane will e-mail all potential participants, reminding them of time and place. She will invite Peter Jeswald, former Chair of Con Com, and Jack Gates, present Chair, to participate.

It was agreed that we would meet at the Town Hall at 6:30 in order to prepare.

There being no further business, the motion was made and seconded to end the meeting, and all members (including Joe on the speaker phone) voted unanimously to do so. The meeting ended at 8:50 pm. The next meeting will be January 17th, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David Barten, clerk