

Minutes, Planning Board meeting, February 21, 2013

Present: Diane Poland (chair), Joe Strzegowski, Kate Eugin-Moore and David Barten.
Absent: Mike Kurkulonis—snowmobile accident. Presenter: Sue Bridge

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

(1) Minutes—The draft minutes for the meeting of Feb. 7 were accepted unanimously;

(2) Mail –There was no mail needing attention;

(3) For the Board’s information—Tony Borton, as Inspector of Barns, reported that there are 82 residences in Conway where large and small, domestic farm animals and birds of various sizes are housed. These include horses, donkeys, cows, beef cattle, alpacas, chickens/turkeys. It was noted that this is the first comprehensive report of number of animals made in some years, except those made by the Assessors.

(4) Change of PB meeting date—the scheduled meeting of the PB for Thursday, March 7th, has been changed to Tuesday, March 5th, same place, same time. The meeting has a single agenda item, which is focus on the idea of building a Safety Complex. Those department heads having a vested interest in the project have been invited to attend. Diane will change the posting notice.

(5) ConCom, Burkeville—the Board would like to apply to the ConCom to do an RDA on the French property in Burkeville, where an old industrial canal is located. Because the land abutting the canal was, some years past, declared wetlands, the owners have been unable to expand their business. The Board would like to know whether the property in question is still considered wetlands, given the evolution of thinking about Wetland designations at the State level. It was decided that Russ French whose business, OESCO, has been affected by the designation, and whose father, Norm French, owns the land, should be invited to the March 21st, meeting to discuss with the members the matter of the Board’s applying for an RDA on this property. Joe was asked to invite Russ.

(6) Master Plan—Sue Bridge updated the Board on her progress. She had met individually with Diane, Joe and David to get their direct responses to her draft, the assignment having been made at the previous meeting for members to read the draft and be ready to give Sue their reactions. Sue could not meet with Mike, who is unwell, and she and Kate had not yet met together.

David’s response was limited to making wastewater treatment, access to a pure reliable water source—possibly communal and in sections around town—, and flood control in the town center matters of hazardous mitigation. The Master Plan should suggest that the Town plan and build these structures to assure Conway residents they will be as nearly secure and protected as they can be in the future, whatever the unnatural weather events that might occur.

Of the members' reactions, Joe's were the most comprehensive. He thought that:

(a) reference should be made to the Town's designation as a Green Community, and the obligation the Town was now under to fulfill the stipulations that came with the designation and the \$123,000 awarded;

(b) reference should be made to the Federal designation of Rt. 116 as a Scenic Byway, and the probability that grants would become available to help communities like Conway, which are located on the highway, make themselves more attractive and inviting to travelers;

(c) mention should be made that the Board would like to create new Protective Zoning Bylaws that encourage small businesses to set up shop in center Conway. Such laws could include, among other considerations, allowing residential apartments on the second floor of a commercial building;

(d) mention should be made of the need to address Protective Bylaws relating to industrial solar arrays and industrial wind turbines;

Additionally, as the discussion proceeded, it was proposed that Sue should include reference to the desirability of the Town's passing a "Right To Farm" Bylaw, also an anti-fracking Bylaw, given that western Massachusetts is being quietly studied by geologists from fossil-fuel companies to see where natural gas might be located.

The discussion focused on the slow progress Wired- West is making in bringing broad-band service to Conway and other towns. Joe thought the so-called "Middle Mile" would be operational in Conway by summer and asked whether Wired West would be ready to tap into it. If so, mention might be made in the Master Plan about future implications—one being that Conway might well have faster wireless service than is presently available in Boston, and this might result in a spurt in building of houses, as urbanites moved to Conway and set up home businesses.

Diane drew attention to FRCOG's idea that there should be a regional energy administration put in place. This could be mentioned in the Master Plan, but, as the members agreed, with the proviso that Conway likely would not want to be forced into such an arrangement, but would rather base a decision for or against joining on how much progress the Town was itself making in trying to be an energy self-sufficient community.

Kate wanted it to be noted in the Master Plan that there was need to control the speed of motorcycles, cars and trucks on Rt. 116. "Traffic- Calming" would be needed to make the downtown a desirable place to stop, shop, and eat, presuming small businesses could be attracted to settle in the town's center.

Diane suggested that because Kate lives so close to Rt. 116, and hers and Laurie's business, Pages, is located on it, that she should consider herself a committee of one whose task is to see what law enforcement suggests about ways traffic could be

slowed in anticipation of the Scenic Byway becoming an attraction. Kate should report back after consultation with Ken Ouimette, in particular.

The discussion about the Master plan ended with a timeline being set for a full-text draft being completed. It was agreed that the date should be March 5th, when the members would again be asked to do homework —reading and commenting.

(7) Annual Report— Diane said she was ready to write the report, but needed input. David volunteered to look through the PB's minutes for possible items about the Board's first full year of operation, which could/ should be mentioned. He would get these to Diane by Monday, Feb. 25th. Final reports for all committees are due March 6th.

(8) Electronic signs—Mike had asked that in his absence the matter of erecting informational electronic signs be mentioned. He was appalled to see that the meeting on the Pool was announced with a hand-painted, sandwich board in front of the Grammar School. He thinks that the Town should spend the money to create electronic signs notifying of upcoming events. One or more signs should be placed in locations along Rt. 116, where Conway's residents would see them.

It was agreed that the idea has merit and that since Mike has already done research into types and costs of signs, when he gets back on his feet he should make a proposal about what the Board should consider in the way of signs.

(9) Mission statement—Diane asked that the members accept the State's mission statement for Planning boards as that appropriate for Conway's, and thereby make it the Board's own. It was unanimously agreed to do so. A copy of this statement will be attached to this set of minutes, when the minutes have been finalized and placed in the Board's archives.

(10) Concerns—Joe expressed his concern that the Board has made no progress in revising the Protective Zoning Bylaws, though it had committed itself to do so. In response, Diane said the Board will focus on them at the March 21st meeting, and suggested that because time has lapsed, members reread the Protective Zoning Bylaws and be prepared to comment.

(11) Vacancy—David reminded the Board and Kate that she was up for re-election, and for this to happen her name would have to be placed before the caucus on March 4th. She responded that earlier in the day she had decided she would not run, because she was starting a new business, which she would work at along with the one she owns with Laurie, or Pages. She felt the demands required in working at these two projects would be distracting, and she would be unable to focus properly on the affairs before the Board.

The discussion focused on who might be a candidate for the vacant seat, and it was suggested that Tom McCarthy, a landscape architect with the State and long-time Conway resident, should be approached. Diane said she would give him a call.

Motions were made and seconded to end the meeting. The vote was unanimous in favor, and the meeting ended at 8:30, much to the surprise and delight of all, for meetings have tended to run later.

Respectfully submitted

David Barten, clerk