

Planning Board meeting, November 21, 2013

Present: Diane Poland (Chair), Joe Strzegowski (Vice-chair), David Chichester, Mary McClintock, and David Barten

The meeting began at 7:00, as posted. There were six agenda items:

(1) Minutes: the minutes for the meeting of November 7th were accepted unanimously, after noting the need to change a few typos.

(2) Zoning update—Joe reported that Peggy Sloan has the official zoning map for Conway, which along with proposed changes in the Protective Zoning Bylaws will have to be presented both at the Public Hearing planned for February, and the Town Meeting in May.

Diane recommended that the Board's decision about where medical marijuana dispensaries can be located in town also be mentioned at the Hearing.

The discussion that followed addressed the proposed Bylaw change regarding cottage industries. The focus was on how to clarify the reference to "employees" in section 23.1. The concern was that "employee" could be construed to mean several things. The decision was made to see how the State defines "employee".

Joe said that, should a change be made as a result of the research into the State's definition, he would send the changes to Peggy Sloan.

(3) Feasibility studies—Diane reported that the two requests for money for feasibility studies about using the old garage site for a Safety Complex, and a study of a center town septic system, would not appear on the Warrant at the upcoming Special Town Meeting. The reason: the Finance Committee thinks requests of this kind, because they involve money, should be done at the Annual Meeting, where many more people attend.

The Board concluded that the Finance Committee does not realize that a study on the Safety Complex is time-sensitive. The Housing Committee is moving determinedly forward with its plans to establish Senior housing on the Rose site, and, in order to make final recommendations about how the Town-owned site is to be used, as requested by the Select Board, the Planning Board needs to determine as soon as possible whether the old garage site is a feasible place for a Complex.

Although the request for funds for a study of a center village septic system is not time-sensitive, residents who attended the October 16th informational meeting were strongly in favor of doing such a study before considering the creation of a Village Center District (VCD).

It was unanimously voted that Diane should attend the next Select Board meeting, which will be a joint meeting with the Finance Committee, and should present the Planning Board's need to have the articles funding the two studies placed on the Warrant.

(4) Roles and Responsibilities—Both Dave C. and Mary, as the newest members of the Board, wanted clarification about the Board’s legal responsibilities, its priorities—an action plan—and ways by which they could get some training in complex problems that may face the Board down the road.

The discussion first addressed Mary’s interest in knowing about the Board’s legal responsibilities. Creating a Master plan was mentioned, as well as the Board’s authority to grant Special Permits, and to insist upon a Site plan Review for particular projects. In reality, the Board has rarely been faced with having to grant SPs or undertake Site Reviews, because the Town has never instituted Subdivision control.

David C. wanted the Board to establish priorities for 2014, and presented the members with a list of fourteen items that in his short time on the Board had been mentioned as of interest/concern.

The members addressed all fourteen, and decided in the end that action had already been taken on some items on the list, but that the following were to be considered for the new year:

- a. Expand knowledge base of the Planning Board regarding zoning and other issues—The agreed-upon solution was that all members should be able to attend training seminars. It was unanimously voted that the expenses incurred by a member’s participation in these seminars, and travel to and from them, should be paid from the PB’s own funds;
- b. Assist the French family in their effort to expand OESCO—(this led later in the meeting to a discussion about the problem of PB members who know the family personally being at risk of conflict of interest, should they support the French family members in an open forum where abutters, and even the Town’s highway, and emergency services stand against the idea of the Town’s closing the roadway that divides the OESCO complex);
- c. Support affordable housing project and explore other ways to provide senior support services—the conclusion here was that the Board needs to explore ways by which seniors can be transported by public means, on a regular basis, both within the town, and around the region;
- (d) Explore and define Town capital borrowing issues--While the Board has an interest in planning capital projects, it was pointed out that the Select Board has responsibility for raising the money to fund these.
- (e) Renovation of the Town Hall—It was agreed that Diane should ask the Select Board about the status of this project, nothing having been heard about it for some time;
- (f) Help the town strengthen its people resources and develop means for encouraging more volunteers in town government. As the members began to talk

about this issue, they realized that there were many facets to stimulating volunteer activity, and too little time left in the meeting to make any meaningful conclusions. It was decided to take up the question of volunteerism at an upcoming meeting;

(g) Encourage sustainable farming and forestry practices, and explore feasibility of generating power at the concrete dam in the South River State Forest—it was decided to make these issues items for an upcoming meeting, beginning with a report by Joe and Dave B. about a FRCOG meeting on forestry that they had attended on November 20.

(5) Old business—the discussion about helping the Frenches took the form of how to avoid conflict of interest. Mary was especially concerned about this, having just taken the on-line State Conflict of Interest exam. After studying the ins and outs of how a member could be in conflict of interest, it was voted that Diane should place the matter before the Town’s Attorney, John Fitzgibbons.

David B. placed before the members the draft Newsletter the members had thought should be sent to the residents who attended the October 16 informational meeting. The members will look it over and make any adjustments they think necessary.

(6) New business—It was decided by unanimous vote that the Board would attend the FRCOG seminar on Medical Marijuana dispensaries being given on December 5th, 6-8:00 pm. Because this seminar conflicts with the Board’s next scheduled meeting, Diane will inform Tom H. that the Board’s meeting for the 5th is cancelled.

There being no further business, the meeting ended by unanimous vote at 8:55 pm. The next meeting of the Planning Board is supposed to be on December 19th, or on the evening of the Town’s Holiday party. The decision about whether the Board will hold a meeting has yet to be made.

Respectfully submitted,

David Barten, clerk