

(Revised) Draft minutes Planning Board meeting, April 3, 2014

Present: Diane Poland (Chair), Joe Strzegowski (Vice-chair), Dave Chichester, Mary McClintock and David Barten. Also present: Bob Anderson, member of Parks and Rec Committee, Community Preservation Committee, and Friends of the South River.

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

(1) Minutes—the minutes for the two meetings held on March 20th were both unanimously accepted;

(2) Zoning—Joe suggested that there should be a roll call vote in support of the “Town Meeting Version” of the Zoning Bylaws, dated 3/31/2014. He said this was needed for the Town Meeting, so residents would know all members of the Board supported the changes to the Bylaws presented in it.

** (revised) Joe added that an affirmative recommendation by the PB allows it to be brought back promptly if it fails at TM, a negative vote by the PB would require a 2 year waiting period should it fail at TM. An affirmative recommendation allows us to table the article if the discussion becomes too lengthy or contentious and bring it back at a special Town Meeting as soon as possible.

The roll call was: Diane- Yes; Joe—Yes; Mary, Yes; Dave C. – Yes; Dave B.—Yes;

The discussion then focused on Joe’s draft version of the Power Point slide display he will give in a ten minute presentation at the Town Meeting. Joe wanted the members’ reaction.

Mary thought that in some slides there was too much content that required too much reading. There should be fewer words and fewer syllables. Dave thought there needed to be more of a sales pitch, the aim being to convince residents that changes to the Bylaws were in their best interest.

Joe will rework the slides, and send another e-mail draft around.

Members reminded themselves that most residents are likely to be unaware that changes are being proposed, and will have a tendency to react negatively. Dave C. said that at the outset of the presentation, it should be “hammered home” that all residents had the opportunity to attend the October 16, 2013 Informational Session, the Public Hearing on February 27, 2014, also to read references in the *Recorder* about proposed changes, and to read the minutes of every relevant Board meeting and work session with Peggy Sloan, which are posted on-line and are available in hard copy in the Town Office.

Joe suggested that if the discussion at the Meeting seems to be going to run longer than twenty minutes, a spokesperson for the Board should propose Tabling the Article. This action would, according to Mass Law, permit the Board to present the proposed Bylaw changes at a Special Town Meeting in the near future, where there

would be fewer, and more interested and informed people in attendance. Otherwise, should the proposed changes be voted down, the Board would have to wait two years before presenting them again.

(3) Senior housing—there were several facets to this topic:

a. Pixie Holbrook told Diane that the engineers at Berkshire Design, the Northampton-based group with which the Housing Committee is working on a design for a senior complex, could easily do the mylar overlays of the Rose property which Diane, at Ruth Parnell's suggestion, was going to discuss with Ashfield-based Dodson and Flinker, landscape architects. Diane reported that she had told Pixie that her contacts at Berkshire Design should go ahead and work up a "master plan"—with mylar overlays of all projects proposed for the Rose property.

b. At the March 19 meeting chaired by Tom H., the focus was presentation of "facts and figures" about proposed projects for the Rose property. Though there had been spirited discussion, information of the kind Tom wanted was less than sufficient, and so Tom had asked all Committees and Boards to send him memorandums documenting exact detailing of proposed projects.

Several of the Planning Board members had learned informally that both Tom and Rick Bean (Selectman) were frustrated with the information they had received in the memorandums, because it seemed there was no general plan of action for the property. Even the Planning Board did not seem to have a plan, though it had begun the process with the first all-committee and interested-parties meeting on January 10, 2013.

The members were surprised by Tom and Rick's dissatisfaction, the general conclusion being that the two were not aware of the Planning Board's own actions to date, which were intended to prioritize proposed projects. The "Mitigation" and "Senior Housing" projects are both in an advanced design stage and, from the Board's point of view, have to be considered anchor points in the use of the property. Other suggested projects for the land have to be subordinated to these.

It was also mentioned that Tom H. plans to chair a second meeting, again the focus being on "facts and figures," this time trying to create a plan of action, possibly to place before the Town at the May meeting.

As the members worked through this information, it became clear that the real "plan of action" now is for the PB to place a picture of all proposed projects for the Rose property before Natural Heritage, which will say what is acceptable to the State and what is not..

Diane, as Chair, will make this clear to Tom H.

c. Stockman report—David B. had obtained from Emily Stockman the forms needed to ask Conway's ConCom for a "determination of applicability", as Jack Gates had suggested at the meeting on March 19. Dave reported that he had asked Jack

whether the Board would be asking for a “determination” about the applicability of the Stockman Report, or whether the Board have to fill in the forms requesting “determination” about the matter of wetlands with information from the report itself. Jack responded that he would provide an answer in a few days;

(4) Septic study— the Planning Board will have an article on the Warrant for the Town Meeting in which it requests \$12,000 for a feasibility study of a municipal septic system largely focused on serving the center village and close-by areas. The article derives in the urging of residents at meetings on October 19 and February 27 to make the creation of such a system a priority. The members learned, however, that the Finance Committee was not recommending that the article be passed, the reason being lack of details. The members at the next PB meeting on the 17 will see if the information needed to bolster the Board’s request can be supplied.

(5) Sale of the Old Grammar School—The Tibetan Buddhist Community that owns the old school building may be putting it on the market for sale. This possibility had been brought to the Board because it was thought that the old school building might be considered as a senior housing complex, if thoroughly upgraded.

The idea elicited little interest from the members of the PB. The frame building is generally in poor shape, and the Board of Health has determined that the septic system is not adequate for use by residents and visitors. The building lot is very narrow with little room for expansion. The building is composed of four large rooms. Others having been jury-rigged in the basement to serve as classrooms, and a large one-room extension serves the Buddhist Community as a place for circle dancing. It was concluded that a developer might take an interest in turning the facility into housing.

(6) Natural gas pipeline—the members took note of the increasing resistance throughout Franklin County to the natural gas pipeline proposed for construction from Pennsylvania to the eastern shore of Massachusetts. As envisioned, the line would pass through Conway via the Northeast Utility High Voltage Transmission right of way in the northern part of town.

After outlining what was known about the project, the members decided that the Board would take a “wait and see” approach, the concern being that the Federal government could force the project. As it is, it seems that Governor Patrick and other governors of abutting states likely support it. Given Federal and State interest in seeing a pipeline cross Massachusetts, resisters would have little chance to block the project.

(7) Richard Grab—Richard Grab of 381 Upper Road, Deerfield had e-mailed Diane that he was doing an appraisal of the property at 98 South Deerfield Road, Conway and wanted information about what could be done and not done with it and the structure on it, given that the lot is a non-conforming lot. Joe sent Diane the relevant references in the Town’s Protective Zoning Bylaws, which she passed on to Richard.

(8) Flood mitigation--Because Joe and Jack Lochhead have been asked to represent the Town in overseeing the "Mitigation" project, the question was put to Joe about the status of the project. He said there was only one contractor who bid, Weston & Sampson. The bid was within the limits of the grant, and so it seems will be accepted. Should a contract be signed, the mitigation work will begin in the summer of 2015, and continue into the fall.

(9) Marijuana dispensaries—Peggy Sloan had asked the members working with her to create a Bylaw regarding placement of dispensaries to answer three questions, which were mentioned in the minutes for March 20th. It was decided to address these questions at the next Board meeting on April 17.

(10) Senior services—Diane as a member of the Council on Aging placed before the Board a proposal regarding use of the Town Hall for a Yoga class currently conducted by Jody Fontaine in the Fire House. The class is presently a private venture, but if Jody can use the Town Hall it would be subsidized by an outside agency. As it happens, the Association that owns the Fire House has no liability insurance, whereas the Town does. Because of this the proposal to use the Town Hall would allow Judy to conduct the subsidized class at a significantly reduced cost per session of \$5 a person.

The members concluded, after a brief go-round, that this was an issue for the Selectmen, not the Planning Board.

(11) Absences—Dave B. will not be able to attend the meeting on April 17, and Joe will miss the meeting on May 1st.

Diane took the opportunity to mention that she is faced with a health issue that could affect her participation in the Board's activities in the near future. She may need someone to take her place. It was agreed that Joe, as Vice-chair will step in as needed, and that Diane should keep Joe informed about her situation.

There being no further business, the meeting ended by unanimous consent at 8:25 pm. The next meeting of the Planning Board is on April 17, 2014 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David Barten, clerk