

**PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH, New Hampshire**

Minutes of July 20, 2015

Members Present: Ivy Vann, Jerry Galus, Tom Weeks, Joe Hanlon, Ed Jeunst, Alan Zeller and guest Bob Holt.

Staff Present: Peter Throop, Director, and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development

Chair Vann called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. "This is our scheduled Workshop meeting" she said as she welcomed the members and introduced Mr. Holt as a perspective new Alternate for the Board. Chair Vann asked the members to each give a brief biography of themselves for their guest and then asked Mr. Holt why he may want to participate as an alternate.

Mr. Holt noted he lived on Kaufman Drive, had been town for about 9 months and was spurred to action by a letter written the editor of the local paper about volunteerism by retired Board of Selectman member Liz Thomas. He noted he had read several pieces on maintaining and building communities, the Master Plan and "how to keep Peterborough, Peterborough" adding "I have been thinking about it and reading." Chair Vann suggested material by Wendell Berry or Christopher Alexander (specifically A Pattern Language).

Mr. Holt went on to explain his father had been in public service and he had absorbed a lot "through frustrated conversations at dinner" and was looking to get involved.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Zeller/Weeks) to approve the Minutes of July 13, 2015 as written with all in favor.

Discussion and Exercise:

Discussion:

With proposed modifications to the Open Space Residential Development Ordinance (OSRD) first on the agenda, Chair Vann began by noting "the Master Plan of 1995, 2003 and right now all say the same thing which is to preserve the rural character with rural development. "We have done a so-so job of this so far" she said adding "and the Infill ordinance allows for existing larger lots to become smaller lots if on an existing street with town water and sewer." She looked up and said "we have not really provided the developer reinforcement for wanting to do the right thing." She said "I have said this a thousand times but if the town burned down tomorrow we could not rebuild it the way it was." As Mr. Weeks interjected with Chair Vann joining him in saying "not unless it is done in two years." Chair Vann concluded "we have to look at our zoning versus the kind of development we want." Mr. Hanlon agreed noting they need to give developers alternatives to monolithic lot *after* lot *after* lot "because that is where this is headed" he said. The members agreed the OSRD ordinance was not working the way it was intended. "We need to fix that" said Chair Vann adding "we get elected to actually have ideas not to just sit here and nod or shake our heads."

A brief review of the OSRD followed by a review of the Innovative Subdivision Ordinance. Chair Vann reiterated it was crucial that the Planning Board get in on the first floor by walking the land with the applicant “because once they have a design on paper and money had been spent they are vested.”

Exercise:

Chair Vann and Mr. Throop had compiled a list of 21 subdivisions in town. “Some are before zoning and others are not” said Chair Vann adding “we want to discuss what we like about them how do they contribute to the rural feel as well as what we dislike and what we feel degrades the rural feel.”

The members began with an older neighborhood, *East and West Ridge Roads*, off Scott Mitchell Road. They had a fairly detailed discussion with a history of some of the problems (a private road running through it) they faced provided by Mr. Weeks. “It is hidden” said another member. “It kind of sticks out like a sore thumb in the middle of nowhere” said Chair Vann.

Some of the likes for the East Ridge side included the way the houses were positioned so that they were set up with blind sides “and you can look out the window to a private outdoor space and not be overlooked by your neighbor” said Chair Vann. Mr. Weeks interjected “they are all identical” with Chair Vann replying “with good building form there is nothing wrong with being identical. The developer has the right to develop the land and like it had been said we cannot lay down in front of the Caterpillar D10 and say *no* you cannot build this!” Mr. Throop noted “this is the tightest single family and duplex development in the Rural District. Mr. Weeks noted that with no setback requirements for the east side “the developer took full advantage of that.”

Mr. Throop asked the members about what they thought might detract from the development with a discussion about the private road running through it followed. Mr. Galus noted he felt the houses were very tightly packed together. “It does not have a feeling of rural, there is no rural character” he said. Chair Vann added “and no in-town character either. It is isolated, it is neither rural nor in-town. It is too anomalous from everything else around it.”

Robbe Farm Road was next with Mr. Throop noting “You cannot see it from the road either.” Chair Vann agreed adding “I would like to see it more attached to West Peterborough which is a real place.” Mr. Weeks noted “I have to say I like this neighborhood, the way the farm houses are nestled in amongst the trees.” Chair Vann noted the potential of connectivity to the rail trail. “This is a nice little neighborhood” said Mr. Weeks. A brief discussion about the sensitivity to the landscape (including trees and boulders) followed with Mr. Jeungst interjecting “there is a range of lot sizes and every lot is unique in the ways it sits, I love it up there.” Mr. Throop agreed noting “the developer did not force every lot to be beside another one so the yards do not extend one to another which contributes to the rural feel.” He also noted the actual topography of the development helped with the rural feel. “The land is more of a visual buffer than a functioning ecological woodland” he said.

Chair Vann mentioned her experience with the Open Space Residential Development (50% in conservation land, 75-foot buffer all around) when she attempted to develop a neighborhood of High Street and a brief discussion of the ordinance and form-based zoning, then quality versus quantity followed. “Developers don’t care, they want to get as many units as possible” said Mr. Weeks. Mr. Hanlon asked “so how do we sweeten the pot?” Chair Vann replied “incentives”

adding “and reminding developers when their homes are more beautiful they are more loved and that makes them more valuable.”

Mr. Galus asked about the Colonial Square development with Mr. Throop replying that development was in the General Residence not Rural District. The members moved on to the *Nubanusit River* community off Steele Road. Mr. Weeks noted the 10-foot wide pathway with an engineered surface on each side for emergency vehicle access (a dislike for him). The members discussed the houses drawn close to each other and the remote parking. Mr. Zeller noted “you walk in your supplies by foot and carry out your garbage by cart” (a dislike for him). “It is only volunteers that go there, I wouldn’t want to live like that” he said. Mr. Throop did not think the communally owned condominiums detracted from the rural character of the land. Chair Vann interjected “it is an animal of its own, I am not sure how much it tells us what we would like to see other places.” Mr. Throop pointed out the spatial orientation on the lots adding “and the community house creates a sense of place that other developments are not likely to have. It is an intentional community” (a like for him). Chair Vann pointed out the enclosed spaces created within the development and said “one thing that is unlike most developments built by the same builder is that there are different sized houses.” Mr. Galus observed “there is only one entrance and one exit.” Chair Vann replied “I don’t like that, connected with streets would make it a real place.”

Long Hill Estates was next with Mr. Weeks noting “these were built in the late 1980s” and noted an issue with how they were built. The member also briefly discussed the drainage issues (drains to a private piece of property) and the circumstances of how it became a town road.

Mr. Hanlon (a resident of Long Hill) told the members “this is a quiet little neighborhood, people seem to like it. There is nothing magical about it but it is always full and it has town water and sewer.” When asked if the units were duplexes Mr. Hanlon replied “quadplexes.” Mr. Weeks noted “in my opinion they took the time not to destroy the landscape and build in and around it. There is a nice feel up there.” Chair Vann agreed noting “it is about as good as it gets.”

Moving on to *Taggart Lane* Chair Vann said “this is charming” adding “it is like an old farmstead with two houses and a barn and a shed that were turned into houses. It is a feel good neighborhood.” Mr. Throop interjected “it is a natural farmstead kind of setting, this is relatively close to a village node.” It was noted and agreed that this type of neighborhood, if built out to the full density allowed (calculated at 33 houses) would not have the same feel. Like the *Nubanusit Neighborhood* it was noted that the houses were all different (a like for all). Chair Vann noted “it is a charming little group of houses, we should think about this when we ask *what do we want to see* in the Rural District, this is a good example.” Mr. Weeks again brought up safety services access with Chair Vann noting “that is why fire trucks have reverse.”

It was noted *Lobacki Drive*, *Mountain View Drive* and *Reynolds Drive* were all built in the 1960s by the same developer. Chair Vann added “and *Hunter Farm Road* as well, you can see how they are all related. Looped road, single family houses on half-acre lots.” She went on to note their lack of town water and sewer as well as the inadequate alternative form of transportation in all the neighborhoods (a dislike for her). When Mr. Weeks pointed out the one entrance of many of the looped roads (a dislike for him) Chair Vann agreed saying “I don’t like it. That was a failure of planning.” Mr. Zeller disagreed noting he lived on such a road “and I like.” A brief discussion about two ins and outs of a neighborhood for the sake of emergency

vehicle access and well as weather-related disasters potentially isolating neighborhoods and the subject of connectivity and walkability followed. Chair Vann concluded the exercise by reviewing the like and dislikes of several neighborhoods. "Isolation and access are issues" she said. Mr. Hanlon replied "you cannot be within walking distance for everything." Chair Vann agreed but added "but if you can get from your front door to a store or the post office on your feet or riding a bike is what I am talking about. We want to see neighborhoods that are more walkable."

Update: Shoreland Protection Overlay District:

Mr. Throop announced a joint Workshop with the ZBA and Town Attorney John Ratigan on August 17th at 6:30 p.m. He also noted the regularly scheduled meeting on August 10th would consist of the continuance of the Global Montello site plan review and a subdivision request for two abutting parcels.

Administrative Amendments to Approved Plans:

Mr. Throop explained minor site design changes (drainage plan, minor modification to the footprint of the building with some articulations removed and added landscaping) to the Scott Farrar plan as well as some deed-related issues for a proposal to do agriculture (CSA) on Vose Farm Road (at the Brookstone Building) had been resolved administratively by the Planning Office.

Mr. Throop also noted the Divine Mercy Church also had minor changes in that they also added landscaping and squared off some bump-outs for easier access for the hearse at funerals. "They also modified their access for wheelchair accessibility" he said adding "all relatively minor changes without great impact."

Reports from Other Committees:

Mr. Throop gave a brief update on the EDA's Broad Band Workgroup noting "they are going great guns." He reiterated the meetings with Comcast and Fairpoint as well as an upcoming meeting with Wy Valley and potentially other communications companies. "We are learning a lot" he said adding "with more and more coming to light." Chair Vann added the need to increase discussion about Broad Band becoming thought of as a utility.

Next Meeting:

August 10, 2015 6:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant