

TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR JUNE 1, 2020 MEETING
Approved on June 15, 2020

Commission/Board Members Present: Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, George Lamphere (left at 7:15) and Mark Letorney.

Commission/Board Members Absent: Koi Boynton

Also Present: Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator), Dan Strobridge, Lee Strobridge, Maureen Wilcox, Paul Birnholz, Kim Guidry and Ira Allen.

The meeting began at: 6:40 p.m.

Amendments to Agenda

No amendments offered.

Citizens to be Heard & Announcements

Lee and Dan Strobridge said they wish to develop a primitive campground on their Pettingill Road property and asked whether that is an allowed use in the regulations.

G. Gebauer suggested they work with K. Lalley and M. Manka to determine whether that was allowed and, if so, what permits would be required.

S. Jensen said a campground is in keeping with the town's vision and if it wasn't a permitted use the Commission should look to amend the regulations during the next round of amendments.

M. Manka said she just reviewed the use definitions and they do not appear to address or include campgrounds. She said she would discuss the matter with K. Lalley prior to following up with the Strobridges.

S. Jensen noted that even if campgrounds are permitted in town Act 250 may be an issue/hinderance.

Draft CWSRF IUP Comments

The Planning Commission reviewed and approved of the letter outlining their concerns with the draft Clean Water State Revolving Fund Intended Use Plan for the coming fiscal year. G. Gebauer asked that the document be finalized and sent to him for signature.

1705 Route 128 Property

The Planning Commission discussed how and whether to proceed with the community wastewater and 1705 Rte. 128 projects.

G. Gebauer began by stating wastewater is the immediate need and should be the Commission's top priority. He noted that the 1705 property is not inextricably linked to the success of wastewater.

M. Letorney said he sees this as a three component project 1) wastewater, 2) 1705 project and 3) town office building which includes solar, public restrooms and multi-use commercial space to offset expenses. He noted the latter would be the last piece of the puzzle and would require a bond vote in 5 – 6 years.

G. Lamphere agreed with M. Letorney. He noted that there would of course be some risk but if

planned thoroughly it would result in a revitalized village, give commercial more assets more to build on and grow the tax base. He also noted that this would bring much desired amenities to the entire community, not just village residents.

S. Jensen said the plans will not work if the cost burden falls on the taxpayers. He said the town needs vault space and paying to store books off-site will mean incurring an ongoing expense. He added that the town should be focused on freeing up land to expand the town office. S. Jensen also noted that doing something now means we can share capital and maintenance costs and doing nothing means all the cost of addressing the town office's wastewater and space issues will fall solely on the taxpayers. Lastly, he said doing something will grow and diversify the grand list and create jobs and prospect for the community, which is what residents want. He said regarding the 1705 property and brownfields the town will have access to funds in order clean up the site and to obtain a certificate of compliance which private individuals do not have access to. He suggested that the town work on the 1705 and wastewater project simultaneously while having a plan B if the 1705 project vision does not come to fruition.

G. Gebauer noted that there are many unknowns regarding the 1705 project such as the TIF legislation and brownfield sampling results.

Ira Allen explained the construction of the current town office and the possibility of expanding on-site.

The Commission discussed requesting that the Selectboard open a line of credit for the Town. G. Gebauer offered to draft said request letter.

G. Gebauer asked that CDBG meeting follow up and Planning Commission reorganization be placed on the July agenda.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:29 p.m.

Submitted by,
Melissa Manka
Westford Planning Coordinator