

TOWN OF WESTFORD
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MINUTES
Minutes for October 28, 2024.
Approved on November 11, 2024.

Board Members Present: Matt Wamsganz (Chair), Francois Ross (Vice Chair), Bill Cleary, Peter Armata, Andrew Collier

Board Members Absent: Dennis Angiono, Jesse Labreque

Also Present: Harmony Cism (DRB Coordinator, Zoning Administrator), Callie Hamdy (Minute Clerk), Lee Hendler, Louella Strobridge, Jaques LaRose, Mike Blair, Daniel Strobridge, Tom Thibault

The meeting began at 7:00 pm

Final Plat Public Hearing for 9 Lot, 8 Unit Subdivision & Planned Unit Development – Swansong Take Two, LLC Property. Applicant: Lee Hendler (approx.83.2 acres) located off Route 128 in the Rural 5, Rural 10, Water Resource Overlay, and Flood Hazard Overlay Zoning Districts. This is a proposal to subdivide the subject parcel into 8 single-unit dwelling lots and a 62.4-acre open space lot.

Jaques LaRose was present for Swansong Take Two LLC. He presented the changes to the project since the last meeting. They had addressed concerns from last time such as the landscaping plan. They have also provided a draft Homeowners Association. They have obtained several state permits since the last meeting about this project. They were now well above the required 25 points in the R5 Point system.

Francois motioned to close the Swansong Take Two LLC Final Hearing. Peter seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Site Plan/Conditional Use and Subdivision Amendment Public Hearing – Strobridge Property (approx. 82.46 acres). Applicant: Daniel & Louella Strobridge. Located off Pettingill Road in the Rural 10, Water Resource Overlay, and Flood Hazard Overlay Zoning Districts. This is a proposal to receive after-the-fact conditional use approval of a campground with 4 or more campsites, and to re-merge two lots that were previously subdivided.

Daniel Strobridge was present and gave a history of the property and campground. He provided the members who had not been present at the walkthrough with detailed photos of the property. Matt went through the staff report.

The DRB should determine if the number of accesses should be reduced or made to be in conformance to roadway standards.

Site Plan should be submitted that shows all structures and roads/drives. Matt asked what their reasoning was for the merging of the two lots as opposed to leaving them separate? The Strobridges explained this was to get the property back to how it had been when Louella's parents purchased the property. Peter asked if there are roads leading to all the campgrounds. Yes, there are unimproved farm roads, but he had added gravel in some areas.

The property is served by four separate access points. Should there be conditions placed on the decisions such as reducing the number of curb cuts or having shared access? Bill asked Dan if he added any culverts? Dan explained the town had put in a culvert at the second entrance. They had put in a culvert at the beaver dam, but that was on the stream.

Peter was thinking about trying to determine roadways/driveways to people's homes, but that's not the case here. In this case we are not talking about roads to people's homes, we are talking about access to camp sites. So, it is a little different. The board discussed emergency access. There is a cabin at one campsite and a platform with a tent on another. Any of the sites, no matter how bare, could have a medical emergency. Bill made a general statement about the general application that it is a fairly benign use of the land keeping it mostly open land. The board agreed that if they had to build roads to every site it would ruin the look of the primitive campgrounds. Francois is not concerned about the four entrances because this is a low-trafficked backroad. They will have to get access permits for the commercial use. Bill and Peter also discussed squaring up the access points, so it was easier for drivers to see oncoming traffic. This was specific to the road serving sites 1 and 2. The board discussed having 911 numbers at each site, which they agreed would be an easy fix.

Bill also thought having multiple accesses gives campers the privacy they desire with primitive camping. Matt thought the fact they are existing farm accesses helped the cause. Andrew thinks the board is okay with the four entrances. This is not a normal development so he feels we are safe in the fact that somebody cannot push back on this setting a precedent for regular development. Matt still questioned any potential precedent we might set here. If somebody came in with no accesses for the same project we would not allow them to build more than one access.

The property has significant natural screening, but portolets are visible from the road and should be shielded from public view. The Strobridges indicated they were intending to move at least one portolets to a less visible area.

Harold's View Farm has four free standing signs, but regulations state they should only have one free standing sign. Matt thought this was another reason to leave the lot unmerged. It was not the Strobridges desire to take down the signs as they felt it would be difficult for campers to find the sites without signage, nor did they feel 911 signage would be adequate. There was no leeway on the signage in the regulations, Francois thought that this was another thing to bring before the PC for review. The board also thought that they could put up the 911 signs in the ROW and put the existing signs further down the roadways to the campsites.

They talked about the proposed lot merger. Merging the two lots would increase the level of non-conformity to the property. Lot 1 was a deferred development lot, but there was a platform with a tent on it. Because it was developed it should be changed so development is allowed or merge it with the original parcel. If the lots were to stay unmerged the site plan should show a building envelope. Andrew thought doing it this way made him feel uneasy. A building envelope can have a house put on it, but the road is not required to be up to standards. Lot 2 has a building envelope on it, Harmony was not sure if the cabin sat within this building envelopes. Francois knows they need to get a survey and a site plan map done. That is not going to happen tomorrow. He thinks there are some very viable questions that the PC should answer here. Matt said that it is going to take a while, we are going to have to use the existing regulations for this. Andrew thinks if they merge the lots that solves the unease he feels at the deferred development lot. The access points were already okay for the board. Matt thought because of

this maybe merging the lots was the best decision. Andrew indicated that this is the best we can do right now, there's no playbook for a situation like this.

The board discussed either continuing the hearing or what conditions they would have. Francois thought that the campground would be closing down for the next five months anyways, there's time to think about it before they reopen in the spring. For this reason, he thought the board should continue the hearing. The board agreed.

Francois moved to continue the hearing on January 27, 2025 at 7:00pm. Andrew seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Citizens to Be Heard, Announcements & Other Business

There were no other citizens to be heard.

Minutes

Peter motioned to approve the minutes of September 23, 2024. Francois seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Deliberative Session

The board entered deliberative session at 8:17 p.m.

Adjourned 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by,
Harmony Cism, DRB Coordinator

Callie Hamdy, Minute Clerk