



Town of Becket
Planning Board
557 Main Street
Becket, Massachusetts 01223
Phone (413) 623-8934 Ext. 20

Planning Board Meeting Minutes, July 12, 2017

Planning Board Members Present: Robert Ronzio, Chairman; Gale LaBelle; Alvin Blake and James Levy

Planning Board Members Absent: Ann Krawet, Clerk and Charles Andrews

Administrative Assistant: Jessica Perotti, recording meeting minutes

Public Present: Cpl. Victor Santiago-Soto

Meeting Opens: 7:08 PM

Call to Order

Robert Ronzio opens the meeting and informs all that agendas are on the table for anyone that would like a copy. Mr. Ronzio then explains that this meeting is being held in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40A and the By-laws of the Town of Becket. A decision to issue a special permit requires a minimum of 4 positive votes from a 5 member Board. Mr. Ronzio then introduces himself and the rest of the members of the Board and Administrative Assistant.

Board Member Comments and Announcements

None.

Board to Complete Reorganization

Mr. Ronzio reviewed the positions that have been elected in at the last meeting: Robert Ronzio was elected as Chairman and Ann Krawet was elected as Clerk. Mr. Ronzio continues with the Board Reorganization informing the Board Members the positions of Vice Chairman and Clerk Pro Tem still need to be filled. Mr. Ronzio informs the Board that the Clerk Pro Tem only acts as Clerk when the Clerk is absent. Mr. Ronzio then calls for nominations for the Clerk Pro Tem. Ms. LaBelle nominates Alvin Blake to serve as Clerk Pro Tem. Mr. Levy seconds the nomination. Mr. Ronzio calls for any other nominations. There are none. Mr. Blake accepts the nomination. Mr. Ronzio calls for a vote. All in favor. Alvin Blake is elected to serve as Clerk Pro Tem. There is a brief discussion to go over what is expected of the Clerk Pro Tem. Mr. Ronzio moves on to the next position to fill, Vice Chairman. Mr. Ronzio asks if there is anyone interested in the position. Mr. Levy feels that as a new member to the Planning Board, he doesn't feel qualified enough to serve as Vice Chairman. There is discussion among the Board Members about Ms. LaBelle's ability to serve as Vice Chair being the alternate to the Board. Since the Vice Chairman would only act in the absence of the Chairman and since Ms. LaBelle is the alternate and would only be present because of an absence, the Board decides she could be nominated to serve as Vice Chairman. Mr. Ronzio calls for nominations for the position of Vice Chairman. Mr. Blake nominates Gale LaBelle. Mr. Levy seconds the nomination. Mr. Ronzio calls for any other nominations. There are none. Ms. LaBelle accepts the nomination. Mr. Ronzio calls for a vote.



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All in favor. Gale LaBelle is elected to serve as Vice Chair. This completes the reorganization of the Planning Board.

Board to Review May 10, 2017 and June 14, 2017 Meeting Minutes

The Board decides to table the approval of the minutes until the next meeting because there were not enough members present that attended the meetings to approve them.

New Business: Informal Discussion with Cpl. Victor Santiago-Soto Regarding Developing a Facility for Homeless/Disabled Veterans

The Board recognizes Cpl. Victor Santiago-Soto. Mr. Santiago-Soto stood to introduce his proposal for developing a re-habilitation facility for both homeless and disabled veterans. He informs the Board of the property he is interested in acquiring should the Board be agreeable with his plan. The property is located at 194 Leland Road- formally known as the Kushi Institute. There are approximately 610 acres on this property which also extends into the towns of Middlefield and Washington. Mr. Santiago-Soto's ultimate goal is to provide the help the veterans would need to get them back into society as well as giving them their own sanctuary. At the rehabilitation facility, Mr. Santiago-Soto plans to have a staff including doctors, nurses, therapists, interns and EMT's. He also plans on having vehicles for recreational and medical transportation. Mr. Santiago-Soto continues on letting the Board know he would like to build small homes for those that would like to live at the facility. He plans on using approximately 80-90 acres for these homes leaving the rest for any kind of utility usage such as a power source. Mr. Santiago-Soto explains that the houses would be essentially leased since the land will remain in the name of the facility. The veterans living at the facility would be committed to a 5 year lease. Once the veterans have been rehabilitated, they will work with mentors or some type of job assistance program to help find them jobs in the community. They also plan on reaching out to the Town for any needs that could be filled from trash pick-up to a building project. The Board asks some questions of Mr. Santiago-Soto. They want to know how many homes are planned to be built at the facility. Mr. Santiago- Soto reports they would like to have no more than 100 units. Mr. Ronzio inquires how they plan to subdivide the land. Mr. Santiago-Soto would like to put the homes on half (½) acre lots. The Board erupts with disapproval informing Mr. Santiago-Soto of some of the issues the Town has faced with lots that small. They let Mr. Santiago-Soto know that lots divided cannot be less than 2 acres. Mr. Santiago-Soto agrees with this requirement and after hearing this information, lets the Board know they will have no more than 50 units. The Board goes on to other concerns they have including: transportation, the strain on the local ambulance service, gas stations, grocery stores and professional services. While Mr. Santiago-Soto is unaware there are no gas stations in Town, he lets the Board know that the other services will be incorporated at the facility with



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the exception of dentists and some other possible professional services that the residences would need. For these needs, they would be transported by the facility. Other main concerns that the Board addresses are: septic systems, wells and float bonds. Mr. Santiago-Soto says there is already a septic system in place. Ms. LaBelle informs Mr. Santiago-Soto that an individual well and septic system are needed for each house. Mr. Santiago-Soto tells the Board that he plans to eventually get a wastewater facility to help address that concern. The Board is not satisfied with this. The Board wants to see a plan with this included from the start, not 3-5 years later. Mr. Santiago-Soto lets the Board know it would only be built if the facility grew to the size that it would require it. He doesn't want to build something that is not necessary. Mr. Ronzio informs Mr. Santiago-Soto that the Town would need a float bond because the Town would be left with a huge problem if the project was abandoned; that money would be there to insure the project is completed. Mr. Santiago-Soto lets the Board know that the main purpose of his meeting tonight is to find out how deep he can cut the property. Mr. Ronzio informs Mr. Santiago-Soto of an already established community (Sherwood Forest) that has 600-700 quarter acre lots already available. Mr. Ronzio suggests to Mr. Santiago-Soto that he be in contact with an engineer or architect to develop a formal plan for presentation and during the plan development, a lot of these questions will be answered. Ms. LaBelle reminds Mr. Santiago-Soto that everything will need to be kept within the limits of the Zoning By-laws in Becket. Mr. Ronzio suggests that he familiarize himself with the Subdivision By-laws and directed Mr. Santiago-Soto to the Town website. The Board also lets Mr. Santiago-Soto know of the very harsh winters that Becket has had in the past giving examples of problems that may arise including being stranded there in a worst case scenario. Mr. Santiago-Soto wraps up his presentation and thanks the Board for their time.

The Board takes a brief break.

Old Business: Proposed Driveway By-law Review

Board was scheduled to discuss the Proposed Driveway By-law but Mr. Ronzio suggests since it won't be presented again until the next Town Meeting and to table the discussion until Ms. Krawet, who is a lead proponent on it, can be present for the discussion. Mr. Ronzio informs the Board that Ms. Krawet will not be able to attend the next meeting in August. The Board talks about forming a subcommittee to the Planning Board to discuss the proposed Driveway By-law. Members of the subcommittee can include members from the following: Planning Board, ZBA, Select Board, someone from the public and maybe even the Highway Superintendent.



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Training

There are training seminars throughout the year across the state and Mr. Ronzio encourages everyone to go for as much training as they want. Monies are in the budget for training. Mr. Ronzio then poses two (2) questions to the Board. 1) Should it be decided at a meeting who goes to the training? 2) How many people should go to the training? The Board decides that if the training is free, Board Members can register for it themselves and forward the information to Ms. Perotti who can put it on the file so the Board knows who went to various trainings throughout the year. If there are costs for the training seminars, it needs to be approved by the Board who will attend and Ms. Perotti will register those approved to attend. Mr. Ronzio asks Ms. Perotti to be sure to send out notifications for training as soon as they are received. Ms. Perotti agrees.

Correspondence

Mr. Ronzio shows the Board a letter from C. Dean Smith regarding Borrego Solar System Inc.'s solar field located at 0 Tanglewood Circle. In the letter, Mr. Smith inquires about 2 possible **ANR (Approval Not Required)** plans on how to subdivide the development. They would like to: make it a single lot with a road easement bisecting it to replace Tanglewood Circle or make it into two (2) lots with Tanglewood Circle as a private way between the lots and are asking for the Planning Boards input on the two possible plans. Mr. Ronzio reminds the Board that with a subdivision, everyone within that subdivision has the rights to everything within the subdivision - including all the roads. If they take out Tanglewood Circle, then they also eliminate access to the subdivision. Mr. Ronzio points out that the map included with the letter only shows what Borrego Solar Systems, Inc. will be leasing from Mr. Naser. Mr. Ronzio sites **MGL Chapter 41, Section 81W: Modification, Amendment or Rescission of Approval of Plan; Conditions**. In this law, it is clear that all interested parties of a subdivision have to approve any changes to that subdivision that effects their rights to the subdivision. Mr. Ronzio feels that the best decision Borrego Solar Systems, Inc. could make is to leave Tanglewood Circle in place and combining the rest of the lots into 2 lots. If they block the road off, it turns into a dead end road. Mr. Ronzio feels they may want to eliminate this road so that the public also has no access to it. While the road is marked as private, it is not blocked from the public leaving the opportunity for someone to access the solar field. Mr. Ronzio points out that if the lots were combined, they would save on tax costs. He continues on to say he doesn't know how much will be saved in taxes or fencing costs. Mr. Ronzio talks about a **PILOT Program (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes)** that they could enroll in to save on tax costs. Mr. Blake agrees that they have proposed a PILOT payment instead of taxes. Mr. Ronzio claims there are no guarantees with that kind of a program. Mr. Blake argues that there is guarantee with that type of program. Mr. Ronzio rebuts that he has seen this happen down in the Boston area. There is further back and forth



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discussion between the Board Members which is interrupted when Mr. Ronzio brings up the fact that this decision is not one for the Planning Board- it's for the Select Board to decide. Further discussion of the PILOT Program is interrupted when Mr. Levy announces that at this point, the Board cannot make a decision because there is no evidence they have met the requirements yet to even make this request. Mr. Ronzio refers to Becket's Subdivision Rules and Regulations. Mr. Ronzio reads from the **Becket Subdivision Rules & Regulations, Section 5.104 a., b. and c.** After reading the regulations, Mr. Ronzio adds that these Subdivision By-laws were in place when this development was created. Mr. Ronzio concludes that before the Board can answer any questions about this subdivision, more research needs to be done; the original plans for this development need to be gone over. Mr. Ronzio repeats that he feels the easiest thing that could be done is to leave the road in place putting fencing around it and have 2 lots. Ms. LaBelle agrees and asks if you can divide a subdivision up like this. Mr. Ronzio replies that if you own all the contiguous lots that you can combine all the lots into one lot. Discussions go back and forth regarding opinions of what can be done when land is leased versus being owned. They also count how many different owners of property there are within the subdivision. Another subdivision is discussed. The Board discusses the tax advantages of having the lots combined into 1 or 2 lots. Mr. Ronzio brings up the PILOT Program: if they are in that program, they don't get taxed anyway. Mr. Ronzio questions whose decision it is for them to pay into the PILOT Program or to pay taxes. Mr. Blake confirms that it is the Town's decision how they would pay. Mr. Ronzio argues that the Town may decide to have them pay taxes instead of the PILOT Program. Mr. Blake argues that the payments from the PILOT Program may be in fact more than the taxes would be on the property. Mr. Ronzio said it is possible but unknown. The Board discusses possible depreciation of the land because nothing is on it but solar panels and that the value of the solar panels will depreciate over time as well. Mr. Levy says it may be true, but it has nothing to do with the decision that needs to be made. Mr. Blake and Ms. LaBelle discuss what was said at a seminar for solar arrays. They say the speaker at the seminar claimed the PILOT Program would be a guaranteed income of the solar array. Mr. Levy wants to move on to making a decision on the matter. He thinks they (Borrego Solar Systems, Inc.) shouldn't even ask for this without the permission of all the owners. Mr. Ronzio says they can ask for it; our response has to be that without the permission of all the owners, they can divide it into 2 lots leaving Tanglewood Circle right where it is now. If they want to make it into 1 lot, taking away Tanglewood Circle, then they need to have the permission of all the owners within the subdivision. The Board concludes their discussion of their decision with Mr. Ronzio noting that C. Dean Smith, of Borrego Solar Systems, Inc., may still want to come in for a formal hearing on the matter. The question still remaining is who would need to sign the paperwork for combining the lots. Mr. Ronzio feels it should be the owner, not the leaser. Mr. Ronzio goes on to let the Board know that after 20 years, when the



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solar field is done with their lease, it may be decided that someone wants to put housing up there. They may run into problems trying to divide those lots up again. Mr. Levy brings up the mismatch on the PILOT Program length of 10 years and their lease 20 years. Mr. Levy wants to know if after 10 years they decide they are done but still locked into the 20 year lease, if the Town would be out on the tax revenue of the property for the last 10 years of the lease. To resolve the issue, the Board decides to have Mr. Smith come before the Board. Mr. Ronzio tells the Board they need to become more familiar with the ANR Handbook and the Subdivision Rules & Regulations. Ms. Perotti leaves to make copies for the Board Members.

Budget

Monies were taken out of the budget and moved to a different account for the new Clerk of Committees salary so there is not as much in the budget as there was last year. The Board goes over items taken out of the budget including ads costs for notifications placed in the newspaper, training costs, office supplies and salaries.

Any Other Business to Come Before the Board

None.

Adjournment

Ms. LaBelle makes a motion to adjourn. Mr. Levy seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes. Meeting is adjourned at 9:43 PM.