

**MINUTES
CHARLESTOWN PLANNING BOARD
NOVEMBER 20, 2012**

Members Present: Sharon Francis (Vice-Chair); Steve Neill (Ex-Officio); Andy Jellie, Pat Royce, Rose Smith-Hull, Roger Thibodeau

Alternates Present: None

Staff Present: David Edkins – Planning & Zoning Administrator
Regina Borden – Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER: Vice-Chair, Mrs. Francis, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. She noted that regular member, Robert Frizzell (Chair), and alternate members James Jenkins and Eric Lutz were absent. Noting that meetings are tape recorded, she asked that anyone wishing to speak identify themselves for the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 16, 2012:

Approval of the Minutes of the October 16, 2012, meeting was tabled until the next regular meeting due to lack of a quorum from this meeting.

PLANNING & POLICY ISSUES:

Code Enforcement: Due to the fact that there were no new applications to come before the PB, Mrs. Francis suggested that this would be a good time to discuss getting some additional help to take some pressure of handling enforcement issues off Mr. Edkins. Mr. Edkins distributed a spread sheet that represents all the towns in NH with populations between 4,500 and 5,500; Charlestown at 5,113 falls in this range. Charlestown is the only town where the Administrative Assistant/Town Administrator is also responsible for Planning and Code Enforcement. This salary and benefit information is published annually by the NH Municipal Association. He is aware of the fact that some PB members have been disappointed that his enforcement efforts have not been as vigorous as they should be but there is a reason for that and it is time. Mrs. Francis asked if this might be a good time to discuss this with the Selectboard as they are working on the budget. Mr. Edkins pointed out that this is probably not a good time because there are several requests for major staffing increases for 2013 plus there is one more coming. The Ambulance service is looking for a full-time EMT, Recreation Department is looking for a full-time Director/EMT/ Pool Manager and Miss Dennis will be looking for a full time person. A new full-time Custodial position was added this year. The Water and Wastewater Department would also like more help. Tax bills were just mailed; there were increases because of reductions in State funding and the re-evaluation. Mrs. Francis asked Mr. Edkins how much of his time is spent each month on applications. Mr. Edkins responded that it has been slower for the past few years; the number of applications and how complicated they are change month-by-month. Selectboard activities have picked-up; there are more legal issues. Mr. Neill noted the shortage of staff in the office over the past two years due to illness therefore Mr. Edkins has helped. Mr. Edkins pointed out that he does not have problems dealing with the regulatory functions of the PB but it is the enforcement afterwards that has become an issue. Technically that is not a PB function; it is a Selectboard function. The Town has a part-time Building Inspector who puts in about ten hours a week. Mr. LeClair has office hours two evenings a week from 4:00-to-6:00 PM and also does inspections. That might be the position to increase to include Code

Enforcement. Mr. Thibodeau asked how many hours would a Code Enforcement officer need to do the work. Mr. Edkins felt it depends on how aggressive they want it to be. He deals with problems when they are brought to his attention. Maybe doubling the 10 hours a week of the Building Inspector to 20 hours would be sufficient. It could be a new separate position or combined with another position other than the Building Inspector. Some advertisements are for a combined Code Enforcement person with law enforcement experience. There is a backlog that needs to be cleaned-up but the PB would like to think that after that is done they would like to have somebody available when needed; they are not looking to create a part-time job only for a year or two as it will be evaluated. Mr. Neill added that the voters will want to know what the issues are. The Finance Committee and the Selectboard have not yet sat down to talk about all the additional staffing requests. The Selectboard has scheduled a Budget Workshop for Saturday.

The Finance Committee is scheduling in different departments. Next Monday Mr. Weed will be present to talk about the Transfer Station and Highway Department. Mr. Neill felt that, if PB members want to talk to the Finance Committee, the following Monday night might be a good time. Mr. Edkins noted that the ultimate decision about what goes in the budget lies with the Selectboard. The Finance Committee is advisory in nature but their recommendations do carry significant weight.

The PB talked about making a request for 10 hours a week at \$21.00/hour which would total a little under \$11,000/year but this first year would be about half of that amount as someone might not be hired until the middle of the year. Mrs. Royce suggested that they request \$6,500 plus associated costs in 2013. There was discussion relative to needing a valid argument as it will be hard convincing the general public of this need. Mr. Jellie is not in favor of hiring somebody at this stage but maybe next year he might change his mind. He does not feel there have been that many problems. About 90% of people comply after they get a letter.

There was a general consensus that the PB members who are available and support making this request to the Finance Committee come to the December 3rd meeting and then talk to the Selectboard during their meeting on December 5th. Mrs. Francis will put together some talking points prior to the meetings and will also update Mr. Frizzell on the PB discussion. Mr. Edkins will compile a generic list of issues that have been raised in the past year. It would appear that the Code Enforcement person would report to Mr. Edkins but the Selectboard would be his/her ultimate supervisor.

Signs: Mr. Edkins arranged for Mike McCrory from the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission to attend a meeting on December 18th to talk about signs. He asked that they go out and take some pictures so the PB can show him what they think is acceptable and what is not acceptable to see if they can put together some regulations. The more Mr. Edkins travels around the more peripheral signs he sees. When he goes after someone they come back and ask why the others are not being pursued. Some towns state that signage cannot cover more than a certain percentage of the building façade. The town's regulations specifically regulate only signs outdoors; there are none for signs inside windows unless the PB changes the regulations. Mr. Edkins would like to do a photo check before this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no other business, Mr. Neill moved to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Smith-Hull seconded the motion. With six members in favor, the motion was approved. The time was 8:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

Minutes Filed: 11-28-12

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections, if necessary, will be found in the Minutes of the next Planning Board meeting.)