

**MINUTES  
CHARLESTOWN PLANNING BOARD  
MAY 16, 2017**

Members Present: Sharon Francis (Vice-Chair); Thomas Cobb (Ex-Officio);  
Richard Lincourt, Doug Neill, Rose Smith-Hull

Alternates Present: James Jenkins, Duane Wetherby

Staff Present: David Edkins – Planning & Zoning Administrator

**CALL TO ORDER & SEATING OF ALTERNATES:** Mrs. Francis called this meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Mr. Frizzell was unable to attend and asked her to Chair this meeting. Regular member, Mr. John Bruno, and alternate member, Ms. Patricia Chaffee, were also absent. Mrs. Francis asked Mr. Jenkins to sit in Mr. Frizzell’s seat and Mr. Wetherby to sit in Mr. Bruno’s seat on the Board. Mrs. Francis advised that meetings are recorded and asked anyone wishing to speak to identify themselves for the record.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF APRIL 18, 2017:**

**Mrs. Smith-Hull moved to approve the Minutes of the April 18, 2017, Planning Board meeting, as written. Mr. Lincourt seconded the motion with the following correction: Page 3, Sullivan Street, he was not the one who mentioned this property. “Mr. Lincourt” will be changed to “A Board member”. With six members in favor, the minutes were approved as corrected. Mr. Wetherby abstained as he was not present at this meeting.**

**STEVE SCHNEIDER:** Mr. Edkins had invited and introduced Mr. Steve Schneider who is the newly appointed Executive Director of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC). He has been making the rounds of the towns in the region and is happy to be here but is still fairly new having started the first week in April. Mr. Schneider mentioned one of Mr. Nate Miller’s passions was to get the Route 12 project from South Charlestown to North Walpole done. He recently received an email from Mr. John Bruno following his review of the State’s Dredge and Fill Permit. This permit states an 11-foot lane when the original plan was for a 12-foot lane. This road gets a lot of heavy traffic so needs to be designed to accommodate that. Mr. Schneider explained that unfortunately the original DOT State representative is not the one who submitted these new plans. Mr. Edkins noted it was to have 4-foot shoulders. A lot of this goes back to the lack of cooperation by the railroad. Eventually negotiations with the railroad were unsuccessful therefore the project needs to move closer to the river. Even with the latest plan the State will have to go into the river. Mr. Edkins agreed this is a dangerous stretch of road.

Charlestown is not centrally located within the UVLSRPC region. There are a couple of issues that are not unique to any one particular location; housing and workforce development. He started conversations on how they can encourage folks to stay here. The old term was sustainability; the new term is resilience. A part of this is making sure that businesses have the

people to work. How do they deal with the contractors, plumbers and electricians having the problem of not being able to fill a position? There are a couple of good programs that targeted schools in that they can find a place for students to work and encourage young people to stay in the area. Mr. Edkins pointed out that Mr. Olson from Whelen Engineering has been before this PB a number of times and talked about the labor issue as well as the cost of power. He has continually pursued a cheaper source of electricity with limited success. If he were to move into a southern state the kilowatt cost would be substantially lower. Mr. Edkins will make arrangements for Mr. Schneider to have a tour of the Whelen facility as it is an extremely impressive operation. Charlestown does not want to lose Whelen. Mr. Schneider believes the UVLSRPC should help solve regional issues. Mr. Edkins has had several inquiries about solar “farms” but the problem is finding suitable sites.

When Mrs. Francis started working on the last Master Plan she went through all the records and approximately one third of Charlestown’s housing stock consists of mobile homes. Affordable housing is applicable. Mr. Schneider explained in Massachusetts they have an “Affordable Housing Trust”; Gateway Communities. It costs just as much to build in Boston as it does here but you cannot get the same rent here as in Boston. This fund was going to be the difference between a private developer building but still being able to charge market rental rates. It is something the community can support. Charlestown is not unique in needing to deal with adequate housing. Mr. Cobb talked about adequate efficient housing in that an 1,100 square/foot home could replace a mobile home. Change the mobile home parks but they have not changed the structure of the park; it is still an affordable home. Mr. Edkins pointed out the cost of housing in Charlestown is reasonably priced but what scares people are the high property taxes.

Mr. Edkins mentioned the Town is constantly battling with utility companies over the assessed valuation of their properties. TransCanada which was recently purchased by Great River Hydro owns a lot of property in Charlestown along with additional flowage rights over private property. They dropped the 2014 and 2015 Appeals as a part of this change in ownership. The Selectboard hired Mr. Skip Sansoucy to do appraisals on the utilities. Mr. Schneider said it would be interesting if the river communities could get together to do the assessing. Mr. Edkins feels they are going in that direction. Mr. Schneider noted the UVLSRPC can be a partner with the communities that have these problems. Mr. Edkins mentioned these Towns are also dealing with the erosion issue of the dams on the river. This also ties into the Route 12 project.

Mr. Schneider summarized these are a lot of important issues. He asked how the Town’s Land Use regulations are. Mr. Edkins replied they seem to work fairly well but need to be revised a little bit. Charlestown’s zoning is much more liberal than many towns are. About 70% of the Town is Zone “E” in which any use is permitted. Site Plan Review regulations control some of that. The Master Plan will be ten years old in December so we may need to think about an update. The UVLSRPC was very helpful back in 2007. The Town had started an effort for a Capital Improvements Plan; it is the other effort that we need to revive. The Town has a private not-for-profit organization, CEDA, Charlestown Economic Development Association; it has been in existence since the 1980s. They had originally developed the campus where Whelen Engineering is now located. They are now trying to develop another park known as the Grist Mill Park. Mr. Cobb explained they are working on the marketing side; and how do they attract

businesses to that area. Mr. Schneider is happy to come down to visit anytime and will look forward to a tour of Whelen.

**SPRINGFIELD MEDICAL SYSTEMS, INC. – Sign Permit – 250 CEDA Road – Map 105, Lot 29 – Zone F-1 (Industrial Business):** Mr. Edkins reported this is a small 3' x 5' sign that will be at their entrance on CEDA Road. A colored plan was provided. It complies with the Town's regulations. They are working on a sign to be on the building facing Route 12. A temporary Sign Permit for the sign on Route 12 that says Opening Soon has a Temporary Sign Permit that is being renewed as required.

**Mr. Jenkins moved to approve the Sign Permit for Springfield Medical Systems, Inc. as presented. Mrs. Smith-Hull seconded the motion. With seven members in favor, the motion was approved.**

**PLANNING & POLICY ISSUES:**

**Wetlands Permit:** Mr. Edkins brought the members' attention the Department of Transportation Wetlands Permit Application for the Route 12 project. There are several copies in the office if someone wants to look it over. Copies went to the Conservation Commission and the Selectboard.

**Next Meeting:** Mr. Edkins reported the deadline for the June 6<sup>th</sup> meeting was today and there were no new applications. He is expecting an application for the June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. It has been a very slow year so far.

**Springfield Medical Systems, Inc.:** Replying to the concern of Mr. Cobb, Mr. Edkins advised the Wetlands Application to the DES was submitted by Springfield Medical Systems, Inc. He has not yet seen a decision but will check on the status of it on the DES website.

**Alternate Member:** Mr. Edkins reported that several meetings ago the PB members voted to re-appoint Mr. Jenkins and Ms. Chaffee as alternate members. Mr. Wetherby was not present at that meeting but he would like to be re-appointed as an alternate member.

**Mr. Cobb moved to re-appoint Mr. Duane Wetherby as an alternate member for the Planning Board for a one year term. Mr. Neill seconded the motion. With seven members in favor, the motion was approved.**

**Checklist:** Mrs. Francis advised Mr. Edkins had sent out a new Site Plan Application Checklist. Mr. Lincourt recommended making the section clearer on what the applicant shows on the Site Plan regarding the height of trees, cutting within the lot and screening elements on the edge of the property. Mr. Edkins asked Mr. Lincourt to email him the wording he would propose. An Amendment in the Site Plan Regulations would require a Public Hearing. Mr. Lincourt read a section in the current Checklist regarding surface and subsurface storm drainage facilities, etc. It is important it be on the Site Plan. Mr. Edkins said they have dealt with this; it is now covered in the Site Plan Application but there is a question of enforcement. The PB has the right to hire an outside engineer of their choosing to evaluate any plan to be sure it is stating the correct facts. We have a Highway Superintendent; his concern would be drainage into the public right-of-way

and onto Town roads. Mr. Edkins now distributes copies of Site Plan applications to the other Town Departments, asks them to review it and if they have comments let him know by a certain date. It is before the PB makes a decision. Mr. Cobb feels it would be appropriate to have this information given to the PB as a part of the process. Mr. Steve Neill has been pushing to do something similar with Building Permits. Mrs. Francis suggested instead of all check marks it might be helpful to state “see plan sheet number” or “identify plan where this is shown”. Mr. Edkins explained it is always his position to follow-up on the application and check list.

**ADMINISTRATION & CORRESPONDENCE:**

There was no Administration or Correspondence to be presented at this meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**There being no other business, Mr. Jenkins moved to adjourn this meeting. Mr. Neill seconded the motion. With seven members in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

Minutes Filed: May 22, 2017

(**Note:** These are unapproved minutes. Any corrections will be found in the Minutes of the June 6, 2017, Planning Board meeting.)