



Town of Gorham
PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP NOTES
August 11, 2008

A workshop meeting of the Gorham Planning Board was held on Monday, August 11, 2008, at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center Council Chambers, 75 South Street, Gorham, Maine.

In attendance were Susan Robie, Douglas Boyce, Thomas Fickett, Michael Parker, Mark Stelmack and Edward Zelmanow. Planning Board Member Thomas Hughes was absent. Also present were Assistant Planner Thomas Poirier, and Clerk of the Board, Barbara Skinner. Town Planner Deborah Fossum was absent.

1. Review and Approval of the July 14, 2008 Workshop Meeting Notes.

Mr. Fickett suggested that references to Mr. Risbara's first name be changed to "Rocco."

2. Chairman's Report of Town Council Ordinance Committee Meeting.

Ms. Robie said that the Town Council passed the sign ordinance unanimously. Mr. Stelmack noted that the Council tabled the Robie parking lot issue to next year. Ms. Robie said there was an item on the Council's agenda for a modification of the minor site plan process, which the Council voted to send to the Planning Board for public hearing.

3. Landscape Buffering Workshop

Ms. Robie noted that the purpose of the workshop is to discuss types, adequacy, and provisions for landscape buffering with Terry DeWan, RLA, ASLA, of Terrence J. DeWan & Associates, a professional landscape architect with expertise in landscape architecture, visual resource assessment, and design guidelines.

Mr. DeWan introduced Emily Wright, summer intern. He asked the Board members why the workshop is being held, what specific issues are under consideration. Ms. Robie gave the illustration of Plan-It Recycling, the Brickyard Quarry and Asphalt Plant application, and certain industrial developments requiring stringent buffering and screening, as areas where she wished she knew more about landscape buffering. Mr. Parker commented about visual buffers, saying that they need to be looked at from the standpoint of both their attractiveness and their usefulness. Mr. Boyce asked that Mr. DeWan highlight in his presentation any kind of buffering which would provide noise buffering or reduction. Mr. DeWan commented that he is not an acoustical engineering; he is a landscape architect, but he does have a little bit in his presentation on noise.

Mr. Stelmack asked for guidance about landscaping height, noting that some developers prefer to plant small because it is cheaper, and asked if trees do actually deter sound. Mr. DeWan replied that experts will say that a 100 foot linear buffer will decrease the decibel rating by between 3 and 5 decibels, which the average person would not be able to distinguish. He said that the advantage would be psychological: if you can't see the noise source, then it doesn't bother you as much, whether the screen is made of a solid wall, buildings, or vegetation. He said that a section of the Gorham code speaks about an "auditory buffer," the implication being that if enough of anything is planted, it will have some effect on the amount of noise that reaches the receptor. He said, however, he is not sure of the accuracy of that statement.

Mr. DeWan briefly touched on those sections in the Code that address buffering and screening, comparing some sections with similar requirements in other jurisdictions. He then made an in-depth visual presentation dealing with the purposes of buffers, what types of buffers are available,

appropriateness of one type of buffer over another, what is an “adequate” buffer, is there a difference between buffers and screens, living with noncompatible land use design, technical considerations, and, finally, maintenance.

The Board and Mr. DeWan briefly discussed photographs provided by Ms. Robie of various type of buffering and screening provided by businesses in Gorham.

The workshop adjourned at 7:25 p.m. in order to proceed to the regularly scheduled Planning Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara C. Skinner, Clerk of the Board
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