

DATE: April 12, 2012
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: Housatonic Fire Station
FOR: Regular Meeting
PRESENT: Jonathan Hankin, Chairman; Suzanne Fowle Schroeder; Jack Musgrove;
Ethan Culleton; Richard Dohoney
Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Mr. Hankin called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

FORM A'S:

There were no Form A's presented.

MINUTES: MARCH 22, 2012

Ms. Schroeder made a motion to approve the minutes of March 22, 2012 as amended, Mr. Dohoney seconded, all in favor.

HOUSATONIC VILLAGE ZONING ANALYSIS:

Mr. Rembold said a small grant was received for staff to conduct an analysis of Housatonic. The Village Center Overlay District originally included Housatonic but the Planning Board decided to take it out as there had not been enough time to determine how it would work in Housatonic.

Mr. Rembold said the analysis will cover everything west of the river in the residential and business district. The mills will not be included. The analysis will help to identify what patterns exist, there will be recommendations for zoning techniques that could apply to Housatonic and it will target specific sites such as the school and what financial incentives might be available to assist in redevelopment.

Mr. Musgrove asked if the analysis would show how many homes currently conform to the existing zoning.

Mr. Rembold said yes, it has already been determined that 12% of the homes do not conform to R-3 zone acreage requirements. Only 12.3% conform to the setback requirements.

Mr. Musgrove said that is the reason we took Housatonic out of the VCOD, we didn't have enough information but we didn't think it would comply.

Mr. Hankin asked why this exercise is important.

Mr. Rembold said in certain situations redevelopment can occur with a building permit from the Building Inspector. So much of Housatonic is non-conforming that the Building Inspector is not able to issue permits without going through the ZBA for a special permit or a variance. It is hard to ask people to redevelop when they have to go through so many

hoops. This work will help to determine the fabric of the town so it can be determined how to proceed with zoning.

Mr. Musgrove said when people want to do work they are discouraged if it is going to require so much jumping through hoops. Had we put the VCOD in place for Housatonic we would have possibly had unintended consequences.

Mr. Rembold said the goal of this analysis is for BRPC to identify and suggest zoning to work with what it exists in Housatonic.

Mr. Hankin said parcels can be non-conforming in different ways. Only 12% of the properties don't comply with specific zoning criteria. But there are several criteria to meet and other properties will not comply with those. It may be determined that the overall number of non-conforming properties is much higher when they are considered as a whole.

Mr. Rembold said the B-2 zone seems strange. This zone we want to look at less for the uses in it but the patterns of development.

Diego Gutierrez asked if there will be sympathy for waiving parking requirements. Mr. Musgrove said there are no parking requirements in downtown Great Barrington. The same consideration may need to be applied in Housatonic.

Mr. Hankin said the Planning Board has a vehicle for waiving parking. It will be an issue for the mills as well.

Mr. Rembold said he will continue to share the results over the next three months. The work is expected to be finished in July.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT:

Timothy Geller, Executive Director of CDC, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Community Preservation Act with Christine Ward, Cara Davis, Shep Evans, Jim Mercer and Robert Hoogs.

Mr. Geller said CPA is a state statute that sets aside money, raised from a surcharge on the local property tax for open space preservation, affordable housing and historical preservation. The money is put into a fund specific to CPA designated uses. Currently 148 towns, 42%, have adopted the CPA and are beneficiaries of the fund. There are four towns in Berkshire County, Becket, Lenox, Stockbridge and Williamstown. The State also raises a pool of matching funds by levying fees on real estate transfers.

CPA funds would fit the fairgrounds parcel and Lake Mansfield projects. Christine Ward said there are currently grants through DEP for Lake Mansfield. Local funds are needed

to leverage the next level of funding. CPA funds would be a great help to get the funding.

Mr. Hoogs said other communities have used CPA funds for bike and rail trails. It is nice to have plans for projects but having a way to implement those plans makes for a better idea.

Mr. Geller said CPA funds could counteract taxes as the CPA funds can be used for projects with matching funds from the State. This would allow the Town to fund projects without using money from the general fund. Contributing to CPA does not make the tax rate increase. There would be a 3% surcharge applied to the tax bill. There are exemptions from contributing; the first \$100,000 of the assessed value is exempt, senior tax payers can apply for an exemption as can low income homeowners.

Mr. Geller said that by adopting CPA the Town would have access to a pool of money from the State generated from property transfer fees. The State would match Town funds from 25% to up to 100%.

Mr. Hankin said if all communities adopted this there wouldn't be enough money for matching funds.

Mr. Geller said there would always be matching funds. By adopting the maximum 3% surcharge the Town would then be eligible for second and third round allocations. Both Lenox and Stockbridge received funds of 47% and 67%.

Mrs. Ward asked for the Board's support.

Mr. Hoogs said he would like to have a list of all the boards and groups that are in support of these efforts. He is asking individuals to speak in favor at the Annual Town Meeting. He said he appreciated the Board's feedback.

Ms. Schroeder said the word "match" gets thrown around a lot by those who work with grants. She said that is usually not self explanatory it should be made clear what that term refers to.

Mr. Musgrove said he thought the presentation was excellent. He said he is in favor of the program and that the cost is negligible on a per house basis.

Mr. Hankin said he felt the program is relevant but he has reservations about Town purchasing real estate as they have in the past managed real estate purchases badly. He said it does raise taxes.

Planning Board
April 12, 2012
Page 4

Ms. Schroeder said she is in full support.

Mr. Rembold said the money can be used on private property such as the Betros property on Main Street with an open space component and two or three affordable apartments. The Housatonic mills would be another private property that could benefit from this program.

Mr. Dohoney said he has some concerns like Mr. Hankin but he generally supports the effort. He said perhaps there needs to be an ordinance to keep the funds for public use and not private use.

Mr. Hoogs cautioned to not narrow the scope too much.

Mr. Culleton said it would be an effective vehicle for good projects. It seems like the right direction to go in.

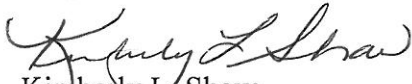
The Board decided to put it on the agenda for the next meeting to make a formal vote of support.

TOWN PLANNER REPORT:

Mr. Rembold said DOT will hold a 25% public hearing for the Main Street Reconstruction project at Crissey Farm at 7 P.M. on May 3, 2012.

Without objection Mr. Hankin adjourned the meeting at 9:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Kimberly L. Shaw

Planning Board Secretary