



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING BOARD

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Approved 9/26/13

September 3, 2013
Planning Board Minutes

Members Present: Rick Leif, Chairman; George Pember, Leslie Harrison, Michelle Gillespie, Theresa Capobianco

Others Present: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Fred Lonardo, Inspector of Buildings/Zoning Enforcement Officer; Michelle Cournoyor, Diane Cournoyor, Michael Sciacca, Kate Bocash, Steve Longvall, Kevin Carroll, David Orlovsky, Andrea Longwood, Susan Hastert, Lindsey O'Donnell, Linda Bock, John Fouracre, Sue LaDue

Meeting began at 7:05pm.

Discussion of Temporary Sign Bylaw

Town Planner provided overview of existing temporary sign bylaw and past history of complaints made to the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator pertaining to some businesses not following the bylaw. Draft changes that were prepared for the 2013 Town Meeting were reviewed. These changes were not presented at the town meeting due to limited time in holding a meeting such as this evening's meeting.

Planning Board comments included:

- Purpose of existing bylaw is to display a message for a short period of time. Not meant to take the place of a permanent sign.
- Need to limit the size of the sign and the duration of the display.
- Residents complain about the number of temporary signs in town along the main streets.
- Some businesses try to use the temporary signs as permanent signs.
- Balance needed between the residents' needs and the needs of the businesses.
- Generally not opposed to temporary signs but need to be managed.

Comments from attendees:

John Fouracre, 99 Pleasant Street

- Businesses need help with advertising and the answer may or may not be temporary signs.
- Businesses need to abide by the bylaw.
- Who at town hall has the time to enforce this part of the bylaw? Businesses to monitor themselves and abide by the timeframe in the bylaw.

Susan LaDue, The Doggie Den, Blake Street

- Design of the present temporary signs seems to be the issue.
- We need to determine what we want the signs to look like and we need to respect the aesthetics.

Brian ?, 292 Main Street

- Needs a temporary sign for more than 45 days.
- Landlord won't allow him to put up a better sign.
- Seems to a proliferation of yard sale signs stapled to telephone poles. What can be done about this issue?

Michelle Cournoyer, 329 West Main Street

- 45 days is not enough for her to advertise her classes.
- Needs to advertise from summer to fall in one consecutive period.
- Could there be a seasonal sign added to the bylaw?
- Temporary sign near AJ's is decent looking.
- Sliding fee scale based on how many days you need the sign?

Mike Sciacca, 120 Maynard Street

- Aesthetics of the signs is a real concern of the residents.
- Balance needed between aesthetics for the residents and advertising for the businesses.
- Design guidelines needed that businesses would follow as to design of their signs.
- Particular issue with flashing sign at 4 West Main Street building.
- Shouldn't have to be an enforcement issue if businesses followed the bylaw.
- Lack of signage is not an issue for the businesses having trouble in this economy. Trouble is the economy and additional signs won't make the business more viable.

Annie Lockwood, Craftworks

- Not in favor of bringing in sign at night.
- Print advertising is expensive.

Kevin Carroll, 45 Auger Avenue

- Weeds and trash along the town streets are a problem.

Representative from FedEx, Beeman Road

- Seasonal would be helpful. Company uses temporary signs to advertise job openings.

John Fouracre, 99 Pleasant Street

- Not many design options exist for an aesthetically designed temporary sign
- Temporary signs consist of sandwich boards with changeable letters.
- Suggest adopting a uniform size sign such as 24 square feet
- 45 days not enough. Double length of time.

Susan LaDue The Doggie Den, Blake Street

- Develop different category of temporary signs?
- Sign needed for reoccurring events
- Seasonal time frame for new category
- Some businesses need a temporary sign for 4-5 days per month
- Some businesses may need more than one temporary sign
- Support the Design Review Committee getting involved in coming up with guidelines for sign design.

Additional Comments from Planning Board:

- Regulations need to be clear for the Building Inspector to enforce.
- Balance needed between signage and aesthetics.
- Perhaps Board of Selectmen could be involved in determining if businesses needed an extended time. Selectmen could review exceptions to the number of days allowed by the bylaw.
- Should temporary signs be internally lit?
- Should any sign in town be internally lit?
- Consider seasonal vs. temporary signs.
- A design standard for temporary signs is worth pursuing.
- Do we address businesses that don't have frontage on Main Street or West Main Street? Allow signs on property other than where business is located?

Fred Lonardo, Inspector of Buildings/Zoning Enforcement Officer:

- Sign complaints received by his office focus on temporary signs – location of them and the number of signs along the main roads.
- Per the current bylaw, number of temporary signs at any one address is based on how many freestanding signs are allowed. One temporary sign allowed per one freestanding sign.
- Encourage locations with multiple tenants to have freestanding with space available on sign for a changing message. Each tenant could schedule time to use changeable area with landowner.
- Could consider changing bylaw regarding size of freestanding sign to add additional area for changing message area.

Rick Leif:

- Board members should send Town Planner any suggestions for temporary sign bylaw changes prior to next meeting on October 1st.
- Discuss signs again at October 1st Planning Board meeting.

Old/New Business

June 18, 2013 minutes approved.

August 13, 2013 amended minutes approved.

September 10, 2013 agenda items:

- Solar bylaw
- Medical marijuana bylaw

- Schedule executive session to discuss an appeal of ZBA decision for 61-65 West Main Street

Bond reduction request for Stirrup Brooks Estates Phase II

- Fred Litchfield, Town Engineer recommends reduction to \$37,000.
- Questions raised by Planning Board members for Town Engineer. Address at next meeting on September 10th.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.