

**SEEKONK PLANNING BOARD
Regular Meeting**

**MINUTES
August 9, 2011**

Present: Ch. Abelson, S. Foulkes, R. Bennett, R. Horsman, M. Bourque
J. Hansen, Town Planner

Absent: L. Dunn (with cause), T. Clancy (without cause)

7:05 pm Ch. Abelson called the meeting to order.

Discussion: Rt. 44 Land Use Study

Town Planner John Hansen reminded the Planning Board that two years ago they received a Technical Assistance grant from SRPEDD to conduct a Land Use Study on Rt. 44. The goal of this study was to examine the car dealerships and see if there might be ways to develop and create potential new uses for this land. SRPEDD conducted site visits, traffic counts and looked over police accident reports. The study in Mr. Hansen's opinion outlined some good strategies that going forward could be prioritized and acted upon.

S. Foulkes wanted to know when the traffic study was done and if they focused on a certain season.

J. Hansen stated it was done within this last year and it was not seasonal however they did do the study on the weekends and during peak traffic times. He also stated that the traffic on Rt. 44 would be seriously impeded if major redevelopment was done on the road.

R. Bennett brought up that the study referred to the Ann & Hope plaza as a Town Center.

The Planning Board discussed this topic from past to present ideas as to what could be done with the Ann & Hope plaza property.

S. Foulkes stated that she was disappointed in the study because it included multiple ideas on how to utilize the Firefly Golf Course land. She commented that it would be wonderful as a town green and it would be better if it stayed open space.

J. Hansen in conclusion asked the Board to approve the study and make it an addendum to the land use section of the Master Plan.

R. Horsman made a motion to endorse the Rt. 44 Land Use Study and for it to be included in the Land Use section of the Master Plan and to be brought up again in January 2012. Seconded by M. Bourque and so unanimously voted by: Ch. Abelson, M. Bourque, S. Foulkes, R. Horsman, R. Bennett.

VOTE: (5-0) to endorse

Discussion: Expedited Permitting

J. Hansen explained to the Board that the idea for expedited permitting came from SRPEDD and other regional planning associations. They put together a “Best Practices” model which has twenty action items to streamline the local permitting process. John went through them and identified actions the board might want to explore doing.

Ch. Abelson believes having one contact person might require establishing a new position or taking someone away from a position because it would require a lot of time.

J. Hansen agreed with Ch. Abelson and determined that the action item to put together should be an informative pamphlet.

R. Horsman agreed with this idea.

R. Bennett agreed and added it would be good to put it on the town web site.

R. Horsman made a motion to develop a local permitting guide for residential and non-residential development by November 2012. Seconded by R. Bennett and so voted unanimously by: Ch. Abelson, M. Bourque, S. Foulkes, R. Horsman, R. Bennett.

VOTE: (5-0) approved

R. Horsman made a motion to have comments from other departments and boards on all projects to be included in Planning Board packets. Seconded by M. Bourque and so voted unanimously by: Ch. Abelson, M. Bourque, S. Foulkes, R. Horsman, R. Bennett.

VOTE: (5-0) approved

Discussion: Luther’s Corners Improvements

J. Hansen updated the board on a discussion he had with a developer about the Board’s plans for Luther’s Corners. The developer thought although the vision was great in concept, in his opinion, in this economy it would be risky for the town to buy the property without an actual buyer on the other end. John noted that he might be just saying that so he could buy the property but he also believed that the developer made some valid points; one being owning a retail building might not be as easy as one thinks due to the banks not giving out loans and trying to find tenants that can afford to go in and stay in. He explained he did not go to the BOS as the Board had directed due to these points. He thought it would be better to go back and discuss with the Board and talk further with prospective developers who would be willing to partner with the town.

R. Horsman made a motion to have the Town Planner talk to prospective developers for Luther’s Corners and to be brought up again in October 2012. Seconded by M. Bourque and so voted unanimously by: Ch. Abelson, M. Bourque, S. Foulkes, R. Horsman, R. Bennett.

VOTE: (5-0) approved

Discussion: Neighborhood Revitalization Via Foreclosure Reuse

J. Hansen commented that he had a discussion with a non-profit affordable housing developer from Taunton. They have worked with the Attorney General's office who were the ones to established a program that revitalizes abandoned houses. This developer takes over foreclosed houses, rehabs them then deed restricts them for affordable housing. They are interested in working with this Board and according to the Assessor's office Seekonk has 18 foreclosures in town. It does not require anything only support from the town.

R. Horsman made a motion to support the concept of Neighborhood Revitalization Foreclosure Reuse. Seconded by R. Bennett and so voted unanimously by: Ch. Abelson, M. Bourque, S. Foulkes, R. Horsman, R. Bennett.

VOTE: (5-0) approved

Discussion: Liquor License Overlay

J. Hansen stated that he was approached by several members of the BOS about the idea of bringing more liquor licenses to town. He was told that the town of Foxboro did something similar and in order to get these licenses they needed to create an overlay district. The BOS had mixed facts and if it did turn out an overlay was necessary then the Planning Board would have to hold the public hearing. During the BOS meeting they suggested the overlay district be in the vicinity of Rt. 6.

The Planning Board discussed prior to the motion the pros and cons of where the overlay district should be.

R. Horsman commented that this was a BOS project and as soon as they were ready to get it going the Planning Board would help them.

R. Bennett commented that more information was needed before an overlay district could be created.

Ch. Abelson agreed more information was needed before having a public hearing.

J. Hansen agreed and said he had contacted Senator Timilty's office several times for actual proof/paperwork that this was the correct process. He still has not heard back from him or his office as of yet.

Ch. Abelson made a motion to have the Town Planner further investigate the Liquor License Overlay district seconded by R. Horsman and so voted unanimously by: Ch. Abelson, M. Bourque, S. Foulkes, R. Horsman, R. Bennett.

VOTE: (5-0) approved

Discussion: Private Roads

J. Hansen commented on the issue brought up during a prior Planning Board meeting about the idea of having a moratorium on street acceptances. After discussions with the new town Administrator and the Zoning Officer he found that they both cautioned that it can become a liability to the town due to the need for access of emergency vehicles.

R. Horsman explained his original reasoning for his wanting the moratorium, which was decreasing DPW's costs.

M. Bourque disagreed with the moratorium and believes it is good to have control but you can't stop building.

J. Hansen will talk to Barnstable to see what process they took.

Approval of minutes

7/12/11 minutes were tabled until next meeting as several grammatical mistakes were found.

Adjournment:

R. Horsman made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by M. Bourque and so voted unanimously by: Ch. Abelson, S. Foulkes, M. Bourque, R. Horsman, R. Bennett

VOTE: (5-0) Motion passes

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 PM

Respectfully Submitted by:

Florice Craig, Secretary