



Town of Westminister

MASSACHUSETTS 01473
FROM THE OFFICE OF THE
PLANNING BOARD
Phone: (978) 874-7414
swallace@westminister-ma.gov

. William C. Taylor, II - Chairman, Marie N. Auger - vice chair, M. Donald Barry Michael Fortin Jon Wyman .

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Monday, June 11, 2012

Room 222, Town Hall

Attendees: Marie Auger, Don Barry, Bud Taylor, Mike Fortin, Jon Wyman, Stephen Wallace-Town Planner

Additional Attendees: Mr. Terry Aho / Ray-Tek Construction LLC

7:01p.m. - Minutes

The Planning Board opened the meeting. Bud informed those present the meeting was being audio recorded. There was a motion by Don to approve the May 29, 2012 meeting minutes. Seconded by Mike. Jon asked for an amendment to reflect a corrected spelling of his first name. Bud asked that the minutes be tabled until the next meeting and be revised to include passing of the gavel to Marie and statements he made during the WBP lot release discussion. Don withdrew the motion to approve. Mike withdrew the second. Voted AIF to table the minutes to the next meeting so they could be revised.

7:02p.m. *Two lot Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan for Ray-Tek Construction LLC, Bean Porridge Hill Road, Szoc Surveyors.*

The PB reviewed the straight forward plan and there were no questions. Marie moved to endorse the plan. Don seconded. Voted AIF to endorse.

7:15p.m. *Discussion about establishing a Planning Board priority for development, based essentially on the Economic Benefits of Commercial/Industrial verses Residential on the municipal budget relative to our Town's long term vision documents.*

Bud asked for comments from the PB members and suggested the PB draft a letter stating the PB position on residential development and its relationship to Town services. Marie reviewed a DOR spreadsheet of Massachusetts town's tax rates, average tax bill, % of residential tax revenue based on land area, state aid percentages and concluded the rates were all over the place. Marie quoted Bill Foster after a meeting stating "I'm not go to worry about supporting industrial/commercial anymore because it doesn't matter how much money a town takes in or where it comes from, it matters how they use it." Marie noted Concord somehow manages to spend an average of \$11,000 from each household. She cited some towns losing entire Police departments or not having Police departments and still getting by. She said the board needed to decide what the goal was, to bring the residential tax rate down?

Bud stated the commonwealth was very prescriptive in order for a town to get state aid. Bud noted the most important thing to recognize was that the schools take more than half of the towns annual budget. If residents want Police and Fire and DPW, their budgets are set items. Property values were the revenue stream that could fluctuate up and down and directly affect the budget depending on market conditions. Stephen noted the recent town government chapter the Master Plan Committee was working on showed the per capita numbers for Westminister DPW, fire and police were higher than most area communities.

Stephen presented the American Farmland Trust report he had distributed to PB members and noted the Farmland Trust had included Sterling MA as one of their target communities. The numbers for Sterling showed that for every \$1.00 received in revenue, residential development had town service costs of \$1.09. Industrial commercial town service costs were \$0.26 of cost for every \$1.00 received. Open space was \$0.34 in cost per \$1.00 received. He noted Westminster's numbers would be similar if a study was done here. Marie noted Sterling's tax rate was \$2.00 lower per thousand than Westminster. Don noted bloated fire and police compared to years ago and DPW workers who did not perform up to similar standards private contractors worked to were problems that inflated the tax rate and it was ultimately the BOS who were responsible to rein in those departments and hold them to higher standards.

Stephen noted a flawed capital planning process, and not maximizing vacant industrial and commercial land presently limited by a sewer moratorium as two significant items that needed to be addressed. Marie noted that sewer capacity had never restricted development in the past. Don noted his struggle to get the Senior/Community project going after delay after delay. Seniors were 23% of town residents. He noted a cruiser costs more than the town spent on seniors last year. Stephen noted that at the July meeting of the Capital Planning Committee, a representative of the award winning budgeting process and Capital Plan for the town of Northborough would be present to discuss their work.

Bud asked the board members whether they believed the reliability and data of the Farmland Trust report. He noted on page one of the report, one of the misrepresentations noted was the false assumption that residential development would lower property taxes by increasing the tax base. He Stephen confirmed the information citing 20 years planning experience. Marie stated past selectmen had encouraged residential development under that false assumption. Mike noted many town boards and departments might not understand the real impact of residential development and if that was the case, the PB could use the opportunity to educate those less informed. Stephen noted there are only two segments of residential development that potentially break even. Elderly housing and million dollar homes. Homes that don't impose on the school system or pay enough in taxes to cover the school costs.

Stephen suggested the board could write a letter to other boards and policy makers to help educate them to the information in the American Farmland Trust report.

Bud noted the recent change to the PB article concerning lot definition on town meeting floor by Mr. Dan Bartkus and how that might impact the residential development he was involved with. The board agreed that the method Mr. Bartkus used to make the change on ATM floor was inappropriate, especially after the PB had duly notified town boards to the public hearings that offered everyone a chance to provide input.

Stephen suggested the PB institute a policy that they not allow amendments to their bylaws on the floor of town meeting.

After discussion, Bud asked for a motion to adopt a policy. Marie was not sure it would be legal and suggested we speak to John Bowen. After more discussion, Marie moved a motion that it would be PB policy to withdraw any PB article if there was any move on town meeting floor to amend that PB article. Don seconded. The board was unanimous in its decision to draft a policy letter.

After further discussion the board composed a list of boards and committees to send the Farmland Trust report letter to.

7:54p.m. Discussion on proposed amendments to the Wireless Communication Facilities bylaw.

Stephen asked the board to review the changes town council had asked to have made to the wireless communication bylaw to remain up to date with recent changes in the law. Since it was a change to zoning, the PB would have to bring the bylaw change to town meeting. Stephen noted MRPC would need to make changes to the cell tower zoning map and the PB would need to hold a public hearing before an anticipated fall town meeting article.

7:59p.m. Discuss how the Planning Board interprets the Zoning Bylaw's various dimensional standards versus how the Building Commissioner interprets them.

Stephen suggested that after the recent Worcester Road ANR, the board meet with Mike Gallant who would help show the board how he interprets the various dimensional provisions used to make determinations for front yard, side yard, rear yard, etc. Any confusion between PB members and Mike G. could be addressed and possible future zoning amendments could be suggested to clarify interpreting the various zoning dimensional provisions. The board decided to move the time of the next scheduled PB meeting of June 25th to 3:00pm to meet with Mike G.

8:11p.m. Announcement

Stephen announced he will be on vacation from Friday June 29th, to Monday, July 9th.

8:12p.m.

Don made a motion to adjourn. Seconded Don. The PB voted AIF to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Fortin

3 Attachments :

- 1 ANR plan from Ray-Tek Construction LLC for Bean Porridge Hill Road.
 - 2 DOR .xls spreadsheets of MA community costs from Marie
 - 3 American Farmland Trust Report
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