



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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PLANNING BOARD WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: William Helm (Chair); Michele Holton (Secretary); Peter Bianchi (Board of Selectmen's Representative); Jeremy Bonin; Emma Crane; William Dietrich; and Elizabeth Meller

MEMBERS ABSENT: Paul Gorman (Vice Chair)

STAFF: Lucy St. John (Planning and Zoning Administrator), Chris Work (Recording Secretary)

Chair Helm called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chair Helm noted that Jan 27th work session was cancelled due to the winter storm event.

Discussion

- Site Plan Regulations – Amendment
- Zoning Amendment Discussion – Overlay Districts and Signs

Chair Helm provided a brief overview of the zoning amendment ideas presented thus far for discussion, and the need to evaluate what can realistically be completed in the next few weeks. He referred to the 2015 Planning Board meeting calendar which includes deadlines for the zoning amendment process, noting that Friday, March 13th is the last day to post and public notices for the first public hearing if a second public hearing is proposed.

Chair Helm explained that he doesn't think that there is enough time to consider changes to the proposed Natural Resource Protection Overlay District draft provisions. He also noted that Selectmen are also planning to add some new alternate members to the Planning Board, and the Conservation Commission. He considers this issue to be a worthwhile project, and one that will require more time to discuss, prepare maps and engage the any new members into the process. He asked Board members for input and all agreed that the draft Natural Resources Protection Overlay District ideas can't be fully vetted this year. All the board members agreed to postpone action on this zoning amendment idea this year, and to actively continue the discussion.

John Wilson, a resident on Pleasant Lake asked if this was the end of this discussion for this draft amendment for this year. Chair Helm conveyed yes, but that it will be discussed again soon.

Chair Helm explained that four specific items will be discussed this evening:

- Site plan regulations/amendment
- Definition of "family"
- Issue of accessory structure or building
- Signs

NH 2015 Legislative Session – Senate Bill 146: Accessory Dwelling Units

Chair Helm explained that the NH Senate Bill 146 has been introduced. The bill establishes requirements for local regulations of accessory dwelling units. The Planning Board has been provided a copy of the draft bill, and the provisions of RSA 674:21 Innovative Land use Controls which are referenced in the bill.

Chair Helm noted that the Planning Board had been discussing potential zoning amendment to address current provisions in the New London ordinance regarding accessory uses, accessory structure and accessory dwelling units. Chair Helm suggested it would be a good idea to get in touch with our elected representatives in Concord – Karen Ebel and Dave Kidder. The Board agreed that it would be beneficial to invite Senator Little, District 8, one of the bills sponsors to attend a Planning Board meeting to discuss the draft bill. Michelle Holton will contact Senator Little.

Ms. St. John noted that many bills are introduced each year, and the language in the bill will likely change as it goes through the legislative process. The Board discussed current issues regarding the accessory structures including implementation relative to housing for the elderly and students at Colby-Sawyer College. Jeremy Bonin referred to the requirement included in the draft bill language, noting that 800 sq. ft. is the size of a two-car garage.

Site Plan Regulations – Amendment of Article I (D) (4)

Chair Helm explained that this draft amendment pertain to addressing the Fast Track provisions. The purpose of making these changes is to make the Site Plan regulations more user friendly, and to clarify the provisions and Site Plan process. Chair Helm noted that at the last meeting several concerns and questions were identified regarding the draft language. The draft for tonight’s discussion includes some minor changes regarding parking and defining the issues regarding the space, as leasable space. The draft revised language for discussion is as follows:

4. A change in Use or Layout of non-residential property or building(s) including changes to the exterior site layout and/or changes to the interior floor plan layout, except Site Plan Review will not be required if:

- a) A change of use and/or changes to the interior floor plan layout occur in a [fully enclosed] space of less than 1000 square feet; and*
- b) The owner of the property obtains written approval of the Fire Chief as to the adherence of the space to all state and local fire and safety regulations; and*
- c) No additional off-street parking would be required in accordance with the standards set forth in the Site plan Review Regulations.*

Key issues for discussion:

- ✓ How Selectmen and/or Planning Board members will know when these changes in non-residential property will take place if this amendment is approved.
- ✓ Fire Safety requirements.
- ✓ Should there be provisions to address, multiple changes over a certain span of time. To prevent incremental changes and how people could circumvented the regulations, by making changes piece-meal.

- ✓ Selectman Bianchi reminded board members that the town has different parking regulations for different uses. Retail require the most parking spaces.
- ✓ Should we say a site plan review is unnecessary if no additional off-street parking will be required by the new owner/tenant?
- ✓ Jeremy Bonin wondered if the board should clarify the language to say “singular leasable space,” which would cover one tenant.
- ✓ The meaning of “fully enclosed space” was briefly debated.
- ✓ How will mixed use development be addressed, for example commercial properties that rent out apartments in the same building, usually upstairs?

Family definition- zoning amendment discussion.

The Board discussion the draft definition of family. Comments included:

- ✓ Should the issue of density be addressed?
- ✓ Will the number of unrelated occupants renting an apartment be restricted?
- ✓ How to address unmarried couples and their children and nuclear family
- ✓ Should the Town keep the current number 5 instead of changing to 3?
- ✓ Using the word household instead of family.
- ✓ Restricting the number of people allowed to live together based on the square footage of the space.

Sign provisions- zoning amendment discussion

Ms. St. John shared an email from the Center from the Arts regarding their concerns with the current sign ordinance, and asking that they be allowed to have more signs than what the regulations allow. They feel their organization will be jeopardized if they cannot use this sort of advertising for events and classes. There was general consensus that the Center should not have an open-ended agreement permitting them to have signs up all over town.

The current draft of revised sign regulations was reviewed page by page by the board. Staff will incorporate the comments into a new revised draft for discussion at the next meeting. Comments included various editorial comments and clarification, discussion on tree mounted signs, decorative signs, prohibited signs and etc.

Selectmen Bianchi once again expressed concern about enforcements

Other Business

Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (RPC), notice for the draft Regional Plan for Public Review and Comment. For additional information refer to the RPC website or public libraries in the region.

Chair Helm pointed out that this regional plan is about 400+ pages. He recognized Bob Crane, who was in attendance, as Bob is one of the Town’s representative to the RPC. Nancy Rollins is the other representative. The Board was asked if they wanted a presentation about the draft plan. Chair Helm asked board members to review the document and if they had any comments to share them with staff.

Chair Helm asked staff to review the details in the report on current use/ wetlands. She noted she had shared this information with the Assessing Department.

Other Zoning Amendment topics:

Lucy St. John suggested the issue of seasonal boat canopies and boat houses be discussed, referring the correspondence included in the file, and the previous information from the Conservation Commission. Chair Helm noted that the Board had decided not to make any change to the Shoreland provisions, as the Board will be discussing the overlay districts in more detail for next year.

Staff was asked about inquiries for petitions to amend the zoning ordinance. Ms. St. John noted that Sandra Rowse has contacted her with questions, and Colby Sawyer College had discussed the process and other zoning ideas, but no formal petitions have been submitted. It was noted that Wed, Feb 11th is the last day to accept petitions to amend the zoning ordinance. Staff referred to the 2015 Planning Board meeting calendar which included dates regarding the zoning amendment process.

Motion to Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn was made by Peter Bianchi and seconded by Elizabeth Meller.

Meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Work
Recording Secretary