

Wilmington Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

Monday September 14, 2020 at 4 p.m. via Zoom

Open Meeting

Cheryl opened the meeting at 4:03 PM.

In attendance: Cheryl LaFlamme, Tom Consolino, John Lebron, Meg Staloff, Angela Yakovleff

Scott Tucker, Town Manager, Mike Tuller Zoning Administrator

Gretchen Havreduk, Economic Development Specialist

Possible Additions to the Agenda

Approve letter of support for OSEC Grant.

No changes need to be made to this letter that was submitted with the application last year, except for the date. Tom asked if there was any provision for an update. Is there a progress report included?

Meg said the grant was not awarded last year, so the Town asked for approval this year.

Cheryl would like a new letter to sign rather than using a copy of last year's letter of support.

Gretchen said BBCC is writing the actual grant and therefore is the applicant. She also said Jen Strostrom, the grant administrator already sent the grant in and the letter of support is not needed. She checked with her to verify.

There was no vote taken.

Public Comment

None

Approve Minutes from August 24, 2020

Tom made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 24, 2020 meeting.

John seconded.

In Favor: Cheryl, Tom, John, Meg, Angela

Opposed: none

Abstain: none

Motion to approve Report on Zoning Ordinance proposed changes

Tom made a motion to approve the Report on Zoning Ordinance proposed changes to be sent to the Select Board.

Meg seconded.

In Favor: Cheryl, Tom, John, Meg, Angela

Opposed: none

Abstain: none

Set new hearing date for Zoning Ordinance proposed changes

Cheryl suggested October 12 for a hearing on zoning ordinance proposed changes. She noted it is Columbus and Indigenous Peoples Day, but that the Town offices are open.

Cheryl made a motion to set October 12, 2020 at 5:00 PM for a hearing on Proposed Zoning Ordinance Changes.

Tom seconded.

In Favor: Cheryl, Tom, John, Meg, Angela

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Continue Discussion on housing needs in Wilmington

Gretchen sent a copy of Brattleboro's Interim zoning by-law as reference and possible starting point for discussion. She noted that although Brattleboro is very different in terms of needs than Wilmington there are similarities in considerations for the Planning Commission to look at. In Brattleboro the by-law is interim and will be in force for two years, but at the end of that time may be permanently put in. Gretchen feels two points are pertinent.

- Removing/adjusting density per unit/per acre
- Unnecessary use restriction removed

We reviewed the goals and policies in the document briefly.

Cheryl noted that Brattleboro was considering all lands: urban, village, etc., some designations we don't have.

Meg thinks density is the piece we should address. A larger building with higher density permitted will provide more housing while the appearance stays the same. Dwelling unit density can be removed but set-backs would remain.

Cheryl asked what will it benefit? There is only a small section of Wilmington that has the required Town water and sewer. What will it add in terms of density?

Gretchen said an example would be adding a second apartment to the main house.

Meg said multiple units within a family home presently fall under conditional use.

Is the purpose to add workforce and affordable housing?

Gretchen said we want to create more housing availability within Wilmington.

John discussed the zoning laws that the Vermont House is presently considering. The House has passed a bill that increases density requirements and allows for lots not less than 1/8 acre. The bill states towns may not have zoning laws that restrict density.

Gretchen asked for a copy of the article to which John referred.

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2020/8/18/vermont-missing-middle>

Cheryl said this takes it out of the purview of the DRB.

Meg said we are not really changing zoning. Do we want to allow greater than two family/duplex housing? Presently accessory housing is already allowed.

Cheryl wondered if we want to look at air B&B. Our job is to look at this in all directions.

There is a difference between air B&B and housing units.

Meg asked what is the problem we are trying to solve?

Cheryl wonders if we want to continue oversight by the DRB?

The boundaries of the waste water district and town water were discussed. Water and sewer districts do not overlap. We will look at the available maps and see if there are gaps in providing both services and where the boundaries are.

Cheryl asked if we would be in conflict with anything based on current zoning.

John said the article he referred to says there would be a density increase from two to four units as long as the lot is not less than 1/8 acre.

Meg referred to present zoning density limits in section 450 B, 5b in the Zoning Ordinance document.

She said she had contacted John Gannon who said he is happy to give an update to the planning Commission on the bill before the House. It is presently in committee.

Meg will continue to follow up on bill # S237.

Scott is not sure there is electronic map of the water district. He can get the boundaries if an electronic copy of the map is not available.

Is there an easy way to look at the zoning district map?

Mike said the Town Plan has a zoning district map at the bottom.

Meg and Cheryl would like to see overlay maps, if available, to get more information, (i.e. and overlay of the water district with the zoning map.) They would also like to look at the impact on town and people's property. A little more specific, better definition of the districts will allow for more feedback.

Town View was discussed.

Mike said Deb has a copy and he will ask her to add our names to the e-mail list.

Cheryl would like townspeople to know what is being discussed.

Meg is under the assumption we are making a by-law change. Why do we want to circumvent the process? Is there a need for a short term change?

Gretchen thinks there is a bit of urgency. Is there a way we can get commuters to stay in Wilmington? That would be helping the economy. We don't want to rush, but we will have a difficult time this winter with workforce.

Meg said even if we begin discussion and take action on an interim by-law, nothing will really have an effect on this winter.

Cheryl thinks it's important to have input from the DRB.

Old Business

none

Next Meeting – September 28, 2020

Agenda will include a continuation of the discussion on housing needs.

Mike will provide us with access to Town View.

Scott will look for an electronic version of the water district boundaries. If unavailable, he will provide us with them.

We will review the water and sewer boundary maps to see where they coincide.

Adjournment

Meg made a motion to adjourn at 5:23 PM.

John seconded.

In Favor: Cheryl, Tom, John, Meg, Angela

Opposed: none

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Yakovleff, scribe

