

Town of Plaistow, NH
Office of the Planning Board
145 Main Street, Plaistow, NH



PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
Mar. 2, 2022

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

1. ROLL CALL:

Tom Alberti, *Ch.* – Present at Town Hall
Tim Moore, *Vice Ch.* - Present at Town Hall
Laurie Milette - Present at Town Hall
Karen Robinson – Present at Town Hall
Greg Taillon, *Selectman's Rep.* Present at Town Hall
Richard Anthony, *Alternate* – Present at Town Hall
Bill Coye, *Selectman's Alt.* - Present at Town Hall
John Cashell, *Planning Director* –Present at Town Hall (non-voting)

2. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF FEBUARY 16, 2022 MINUTES:

Draft minutes of the February 16, 2022 meeting were included with the meeting materials. It was noted that R. Anthony's last name should be capitalized in the Roll Call.

G. Taillon moved, second by K. Robinson to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2022 meeting as corrected.

The motion to approve the minutes as corrected passed 4-0-1 (T. Alberti).

3 & 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Ch. Alberti said the Board would continue the discussion of economic development in the community, how best to address it, how the Planning Board can make this a goal for 2022, if it can help create a plan that coincides with the Master Plan to guide what the Board and perhaps other entities in Town does. He said L. Milette and K. Robinson had discussions regarding the questionnaire that has been under consideration and that he would like to Board to decide what the questionnaire would be like, how it would be delivered, how to engage the community and get responses, and what should be on the questionnaire.

K. Robinson said they felt all the citizens of the Town should be asked for their thoughts and ideas on the economic development of the Town. They proposed a questionnaire which would allow for choices and priorities to help the Board understand where and how fast the townspeople would like to go. She said they started with the question on how to promote a more balanced economy on CI and CIII and to provide choices on the ways to develop it. L. Milette said these are just initial ideas for the Board to work on further. K. Robinson said the second part of the questionnaire focused more on Town itself and a look at the safety of the streets and traffic levels. They suggested asking about the Town taking back ownership of Main Street and having a consultant from the Rockingham Planning Commission help with implementation of the Master Plan. She suggested that a one-page questionnaire would be best and that they be returned to the Library.

Ch. Alberti asked if anyone had experience with surveys; it was noted that T. Moore and G. Taillon had experience with survey creation, distribution and compilation. Ch. Alberti asked how to engage participants, the length of the survey, and how to phrase the questions in order to get good usable information back. G. Taillon said the suggested survey is a good approach as the first part should be quantifiable and the second part should allow for comments. He suggested the best approach is to explain what currently exists and then make the selection choices very clear. He suggested defining good questions whose answers will give the Board information to act upon was essential. Ch. Alberti said a goal needs to be stated such as: the goal for the survey is to engage the community to help develop an economic development plan and what they want to see in the community's future. There was discussion of the uses in the zoning districts for Route 125 and whether these and other uses should be presented for yes/no selection. Also, it was suggested that rather than asking for general comments there should be questions that the Board would like to have commented on. It was agreed the questionnaire should be one sheet of paper and simple to respond to.

Delivery methods were discussed. Ch. Alberti suggested that an electronic questionnaire would be beneficial, backed up by a paper option. It was agreed that most people are used to electronic participation but paper is also needed to encompass all citizens. G. Taillon suggested having the survey in PDF format on the Town website and allow people to complete, print and drop it off. It was also suggested a Survey Monkey link could be emailed to whatever addresses the Town has as well as put on the website. Paper surveys would also be available at Town Hall, Library, etc. G. Taillon said a Google survey could be used which automatically compiles results. There was discussion of putting the survey link on the Town Facebook pages as well as the Town website, attaching it to the elder activities flier, using various Town mailing lists, having paper copies available at Town Hall, the Library and other places and have signage about Town promoting the survey/questionnaire.

Ch. Alberti reminded the Board members that talking about any particular pending application, especially on social media, puts the Board in a position of pre-judging that application and a decision could be considered a problem legally if someone was to question it. He noted that in response to a question from a towns person, he had posted the public hearing notice regarding an application.

Ch. Alberti discussed using Facebook to keep the community informed about Planning Board issues in general. J. Cashell suggested that the use of social media may not be advisable as the Planning Board members, as Town officials, need to remain objective so that proponents and opponents coming before the Board know its members will vote in accordance with the laws of the Town. He noted the Town has a great zoning ordinance and well defined zoning districts that have emerged over years. He said for economic development you need to recognize what the Town already has for zoning districts and the uses that are allowed. He said the districts have been well defined for many years, though the uses have changed. He noted that warehouses are only allowed in the industrial zone, and not in CI and CIII, and that the language of a questionnaire needs to be precise.

G. Taillon said that before the final format of the questions is created it will be important for the Board to consider that how they can act on the response, i.e. if 95% of the respondents say they want restaurants, what can the Board do to make that happen.

It was suggested that the Board likely knows some basics about what people would say on some parts of the survey but that affirmation and information are needed. There was discussion about what questions should be asked, how many townspeople should be surveyed, whether some type of postal mailing should be done to a random portion of the Town, whether calls announcing the survey might increase the return rate. It was agreed there should be notifications that the survey is coming out, and make it available to all electronically and in print format at the Town's public buildings. T. Moore said if it is going to be sent out it should go to everyone. There was discussion about whether non-residents would respond to the survey and how to identify them.

Ch. Alberti asked about the best way to zero in on the survey questions so they could be agreed upon. G. Taillon said you need to start by asking what you want to find out, what you need to know. Ch. Alberti suggested creating a subcommittee to develop the questions. An ad-hoc committee was suggested to establish goals so the whole Board can vote on them. J. Cashell said it is important the Planning Board understand its role and what it was elected to do. There was discussion of the mechanism the Overlay District creates to allow for mixed use districts in the future, and how to communicate this to the residents. The discussion also considered how to protect residential aspect of the community with safe, convenient, user-friendly, quiet neighborhoods where people want to live and the need for commercial enterprises as part of this.

Ch. Alberti said there needs to be a sub-committee to determine and bring the survey questions to the Board for input, and then have another session to determine how to deliver the survey and a time frame for completion. He said if this can be done by mid-year there would be time to create a warrant article to help achieve some of the things identified in the survey.

It was noted there was nothing from the Planning Board in the Town Report. Ch. Alberti noted he should have done it and asked that the Planning Department staff alert the Board to these issues. He suggested an Economic Development Plan would be ideal part of an annual report and that such a report could fuel action across the different Town departments to promote the Town.

4. RPC – REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT & SURVEY PROJECT LAUNCH

Ch. Alberti asked for input on the housing needs survey. It was agreed this should be posted on the website and the Town's Facebook page. J. Cashell suggested we might ask one of their staffers to come and discuss the issue; T. Moore felt they would be willing to do that. He said the RPCs are required to keep an up to date regional master plan and every five years do a regional housing assessment, though they had not been able to do the last one due to the pandemic and funding issues. Ch. Alberti asked if the Town's budget passes, could we have the RPC come in and speak to us about economic development and our survey. T. Moore said they might be available to speak to the Board at the May workshop meeting; Ch. Alberti asked if they could come for the April workshop meeting.

6. OLD BUSINESS: Brighton Drive/North Ave Subdivision

Ch. Alberti mentioned the conversation about the change in developer and the issues agreed upon between the prior developer and abutter and hoped they would be honored. He also asked if the location of the road in that development is compromised by the surveyor's findings could the Town be at risk. J. Cashell said the Board had received a signed and stamped plan by a licensed professional surveyor as accurate. He noted the abutter did have a survey done and if there was a boundary dispute it would have come back to the Board. Ch. Alberti asked if the Town would be exposed if there was a challenge; J. Cashell said the Town is protected by the professional engineer and licensed surveyor's stamps on the plan. Ch. Alberti suggested that if during a Board hearing the applicant agrees reach an accommodation with an abutter it be put on the plan.

7. NEW BUSINESS: Set bond for 49 Plaistow Road (ConvenientMD)

Ch. Alberti asked if the driveway permit had been received from the NH DOT. J. Cashell said they must have worked things out with the DOT and he will make sure the information is given to the Board. There were questions and discussion about Garden Road and whether the building would have to be moved. J. Cashell said that the Board would not be asked to set a bond if all the issues had not been addressed. T. Moore said that the bond request does not normally come to the Board without all the approvals/conditions being met. He noted that work on a State road such as signal light changes would not be part of the bond to be set by the Board.

The Board expressed concern that they were not receiving updates on approved applications. It was noted there are supply chain and worker challenges. T. Moore reported that the changes recommended by the Board for the 2 Main Street convenience store have been made. He said that 49 Plaistow Road is the only case where he could not understand the letter and how they might move the building; he noted any significant change would require coming back to the Planning Board. J. Cashell noted these issues must have been resolved for the Planning Board's professional engineering consultant for the bond amount to be given to the Board.

There was more discussion about Garden Road curb cut and whether it should be one way only. T. Moore said that part of DOT's strategy for Rte. 125 is to reduce curb cuts to the extent possible and to keep people on local roads and off Rte. 125. He noted that in this case, cars would exit at a signal onto Rte. 125, go up 100 feet to exit onto Garden Road, not adding any congestion.

Ch. Alberti said he doesn't see anything in the memorandum that says the DOT concerns were addressed; it was agreed to get clarification before approving to set the bond. There was concern expressed about an apparent timing disconnect between projects approved by the Planning Board and what is happening with driveway permits associated with those projects. J. Cashell suggested that the solution might be for the Board to not finalize approval of site plan applications along Route 125 until the driveway permit is achieved.

Ch. Alberti said the request is to get more information on the decision/determination on the traffic patterns associated with the ConvenientMD site plan, not to hold the project up in any manner but to receive more information.

8. COMMUNICATIONS, UPDATES, FYI'S AND OTHER BUSINESS

Ch. Alberti said he had exchanged emails with Maxann Dobson and she has officially resigned as an alternate member of the Planning Board. He noted that two of the Board's members were in contested elections on March 8th. L. Milette noted she was up for election and this might be her last meeting. G. Taillon said that if he did not get reelected he wanted the Planning Board to know he had enjoyed working with everyone on the Planning Board and respected the experience and passion displayed to benefit Plaistow.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There was no additional business before the Board and the meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charlene A. Glorieux
Minute Taker