



TOWN OF WARNER

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Planning Board Meeting DRAFT Minutes

November 18, 2024

Lower Meeting Room Warner Town Hall 5 E Main St

I. OPEN MEETING : Chair Karen Coyne called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.
ROLL CALL

Planning Board Member	Present	Absent
Karen Coyne, Chair	✓	
James Gaffney	✓	
Pier D'Aprile	✓	
Barak Greene	✓	
Ian Rogers	✓	
Harry Seidel – Select Board	✓	
John Leavitt	✓	
Bob Holmes – Alternate	✓	

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Barb (?last name not stated) asked when the rail trail needs to come to the Planning Board with a site plan. Karen Coyne stated that it would be ideal to come to the Planning Board before any permits are pulled. Michael Smith asked why a site plan was not required for the new flower shop on West Main Street. James Gaffney stated that they were permitted to rebuild the structure with the existing footprint.

Karen Coyne announced that John Leavitt is now a full member of the Planning Board

III. MINUTES: November 4, 2024 and May 20, 2024

Barak Greene made a motion seconded by Ian Rogers to accept the November 4, 2024, Planning Board meeting minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

Barak Greene made a motion seconded by Ian Rogers to accept the May 20, 2024, Planning Board meeting minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Michael Smith Select Board – Discuss Potential lot sales Map 1 Lot 3, Map 30 Lot 18, Map 18 Lot 12 and Map 14 Lot 17

Mike Smith spoke about Map 30 Lot 18, stating that a neighboring property owner would like to purchase the property. He stated the lot is .86 acres zoned in R-1 and was taken for taxes. He will speak to the Highway Department to see if they have any interest. Alice Chamberlain via Zoom stated the Conservation Commission has participated in several site walks but they have not met a body to discuss them.

Pier D'Aprile made a motion seconded by James Gaffney to recommend that Mike Smith proceed forward with the sale of Map 30 Lot 18. Motion passed unanimously.

Mike Smith presented Map 1 Lot 3 a 56 acre parcel in zoning district O.R.-1 on a class 6 road. He explained that there is an individual interested in purchasing the property for agricultural purposes. Mike Smith stated that he had originally been considering logging the property for timber revenue.

Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Barak Greene to recommend that Mike Smith proceed with the investigation into the sale of Map 1 Lot 3. Motion passed unanimously.

Mike Smith presented Map 14 Lot 17 (the old town dump) on North Road. He stated there is a foundation on the property.

James Gaffney made a motion seconded by Barak Greene to recommend that Mike Smith proceed with the investigation into the sale of Map 14 Lot 17. Motion passed, Pier D'Aprile abstained.

Mike Smith present Map 18 Lot 12, a 15 acre lot in zoning district O.C. He explained that he walked the property with the Conservation Commission. Alice Chamberlain stated that the Conservation Commission has not had a chance to discuss this parcel. Mike Smith stated that the set-backs from Stevens Brook is massive, he estimated 200 feet making it difficult to build a house on the property. Mike Smith stated that it would be a good property to be put in conservation because of the wildlife and the brooks that run through it.

James Gaffney made a motion seconded by Barak Greene to recommend the sale of Map 18 Lot 12. Motion passed, Harry Seidel voted in the negative.

B. Vice Chair Nomination

John Leavitt nominated James Gaffney. Ian Rogers nominated Barak Greene. Both accepted the nomination. Ian Rogers outlined a few reasons for nominating Barak Greene; he is versed in the technical aspect of the Planning Board duties, his professional experience, he has experience running meetings and his ability to communicate effectively. James Gaffney asked for clarification on the role of Vice Chair. Karen Coyne explained that the Vice Chair runs the meeting in the absence of the Chair. John Leavitt stated that James Gaffney has all of the same qualities along with the experience of serving on the Planning Board for many years. The Planning Board agreed that Barak Greene would be the Vice Chair.

C. Ed Mical distributed copies of the revised Flood Plain Development Ordinance. He suggested the Planning Board review the document and schedule a discussion for the next Planning Board meeting. Ed Mical explained that much of the language changes are based on the new FEMA guidelines. He explained that the State reviewed Warner's existing ordinance and suggested changes for Warner to include in the ordinance to be compliant with the National Flood Insurance program. He further noted that the state included what they recommend to be changed in the Warner Site Plan Review regulations. The Planning Board agreed to discuss the Flood Plain Development Ordinance on December 2, 2024.

D. Hosing Chapter Master Plan Draft – initial review/discussion

There was discussion regarding housing, is housing infrastructure. James Gaffney stated housing is not infrastructure. Harry Seidel stated housing is an important aspect of infrastructure. Bob Holmes added that HUD classifies housing as infrastructure. Ian suggested using the verbiage "built environment" instead of infrastructure. James Gaffney read the definition of municipal infrastructure that does not include housing. Pier D'Aprile asked how much influence the town should have relative to the development of housing. James Gaffney questioned should the Town influence any type of housing. He stated that he does not believe the Town should encourage or discourage any type of housing. He explained the issue he has with this being that it presumes certain values to impose on properties. He stressed that the Town should not demand or mandate that people build one structure over another. He feels the Town should not be involved.

Bob Holmes stated that the Master Plan that is required by the State, and the Housing Chapter is part of the Master Plan. He recognized that not everyone will like everything in the Master Plan. Ian Rogers reiterated that there is a legal requirement that for towns to have Planning and Zoning Boards. He stated that the Zoning ordinance must be based on the Master Plan. James Gaffney explained that the Master Plan is a non-binding document and is required when a town has a zoning ordinance. Harry Seidel does not want the Town to discourage housing. He spoke about the housing crisis. He referred to the housing survey results. Harry Seidel stated that there should be steps taken to address the future housing problems. Pier D'Aprile explained that Warner has numerous ordinances now and stated that the Housing Chapter should be neutral allowing the ordinances to speak for themselves. Harry Seidel stated that housing is infrastructure even if not owned by the Town. Barak Greene stated that there is a perception that referring to housing as infrastructure in the document implies that it is provided by the Town. Karen Coyne suggested removing the word infrastructure, and the sentence will read "housing is an important aspect in any town". Ian Rogers would prefer the sentence to read "housing is an important aspect of the built environment"

Ian Rogers made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel to strike infrastructure and revise the sentence to read "housing is an important aspect of the built environment in any town. No vote taken

Karen Coyne stated that the Planning Board needs review the document and come back to the table with edits and suggested changes. She agreed with the points made by Pier D'Aprile, the Planning Board needs to decide what they are trying to say, will they remain neutral, if not what is the basis for leaning to one side. James Gaffney stated that it will be difficult because the document as presented is not neutral. He stressed that the instructions given to the HAC were to provide recommendations not a completed chapter. Ian Rogers spoke about how the previous Master Plan was conducted which was through a process of information gathering and a draft was produced. He stated the purpose of this exercise is to have a conversation about planning and zoning in ways that the town can agree on. Barak Greene suggested reviewing this chapter as outlined ideas.

Dana Myskowski explained that she has heard from other rural libraries who are facing challenges in filling positions because of the lack of affordable housing. She spoke about the lack of publicity to encourage residents to attend the meetings on the Housing Chapter.

John Leavitt spoke about the importance of the Town to remain neutral and not encourage any type of housing or energy choices. Bob Holmes read RSA 674:2 Purpose of the Master Plan. He stressed that planning cannot be neutral. He stated that the purpose of the Master Plan is to be biased. Bob Holmes explained that the purpose is guide the Planning Board and Zoning Board. He reiterated that the Master Plan is not a neutral document, it is geared toward what future development should look like.

Ian Rogers stated that the document was drafted in manner that avoided mandating language. He explained that having a strong Master Plan gives a baseline to discuss different kinds of ideas. Barak Greene stated the median income for Merrimack County is \$80,000. He spoke about the need to get creative in addressing the housing challenges. James Gaffney stated that if it were economical for property owners to develop property according to our zoning ordinances they probably would have done it. He stated that the Town of Warner cannot change the cost of materials or demand. James Gaffney asserted that the Planning Board should consider solutions and not things that commit the Town and taxpayers to additional expenses. He stated that the number one position from residents is that taxes are too high. He explained that taxes cannot be lowered by increasing what the Town is responsible for maintaining such as infrastructure. Ian Rogers explained that the information in the draft came from community input. Harry Seidel spoke about the high taxes in Warner. He stressed that Warner has a lack of revenue and a lack of housing. Harry Seidel stated the solution is to build housing. John Leavitt spoke about a drawback in this document is that it does not address revenue. He stated that the biggest issue people have is high taxes. John Leavitt spoke about a suggested zoning change to reduce the required lot size.

He explained that the problem with that is that if a house is built and a school age child resides there it is a revenue negative. He explained that Warner needs to figure out a way to build housing to have elderly housing or small homes for a married couples with babies. Pier D'Aprile encouraged everyone to check their bias and focus on the best course for the community. Harry Seidel spoke about the need for all ages for a healthy community. He assert that appealing to families with school children is not a negative. James Gaffney took issue with Harry's comments. He asserted that Mr. Leavitt's statement is correct by the numbers.

Ian Rogers pointed out that the document has a section that relates school and enrollment. Laura (realtor) explained that a recent study showed no correlation between school age children and higher taxes. She stated that it is not as cut and dry. Alice Chamberlain confirmed and cautioned that discouraging a group could be housing discrimination. She reminded the Planning Board that the document was drafted based off the town's feedback. Karen Coyne asked if the supporting data is available. Ian Rogers stated he would be happy to point anyone interested towards the direction of the supporting data. Karen Coyne believes that would be helpful in moving this along.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Feedback from Town Counsel and Hopkinton Planning Board – if received

No feedback received.

VI. REPORTS

- a. Chair's Report- Chair, Karen Coyne
None
- b. Select Board - Harry Seidel
Harry Seidel stated that the Select Board is working with the Budget Committee on budget review. The Select Board is working on a few difficult enforcement issues (encampment and a residential tree house)
- c. Regional Planning Commission - Derek Narducci, Ben Frost
None
- d. Economic Development Advisory Committee
None
- e. Agricultural Commission - James Gaffney
None
- f. Regional Transportation Advisory Committee
None

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

None

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

IX. ADJOURN

Karen Coyne adjourned the meeting at 9:35 PM

Respectfully submitted by
Tracy Doherty