

Planning Commission Public Hearing Minutes

Regarding Petition by a Group of Voters to Repeal the Bylaw in its Entirety

July 10, 2017 at 6:00 PM

Readsboro Central School

Draft Until Approved and Signed Below

The Public Hearing opened at 6:00pm with the following Members of the Planning Commission present: Eunice Crowell, Susan Bailey, Chair, and Priscilla Margola, Secretary.

Present also were Helyn Strom-Henriksen, Cyndi Candiloro, John Whitman, Larry Hopkins, Rhonda Smith, Cheri Giddings, Ray Eilers, Robert Marechal, Jim Franzinelli, Elaine Dove, Linda Donahue, Reporter Deerfield Valley News.

Only 5 people who had signed this petition were present. There were 34 voters whose names were verified by the Town Clerk of Readsboro. Posting of the Public Hearing Notice, 30 day notice had been mailed to the surrounding Towns, WRC, Department of Housing and Community Development and Deerfield Valley News, as required and signed notices that they had been received were received back. The appropriate 15 days notice has been followed and this Public Hearing Date Notice was posted at the three appropriate places. Both the 30 and 15 Posting notices were also posted to the Town Web site.

The Petitions submitted were to abolish the Zoning Bylaw in its entirety because it was felt that there was unfairness in the judging of many of the violations presented to Zoning Administrator/Acting Zoning Administrator and the Development Review Board. In 2014, there was a backlog of 20 violations that were submitted as violations and it is suggested that there was no-follow through and/or resolution. Specifically camp permits were each handled differently.

Some were approved but without the proper water and sewer requirements as per the State of Vermont (according to Mr. Hopkins list).

Question from the floor; Ray Eilers asked where the notices of this Public Hearing were placed. The Planning Commission Chair responded that the 30 Day notice had been sent as required to all abutting towns, WRC, Deerfield Valley News, Department of Housing and Community Services and posted to the Town web site. The 15 day warning was posted in the 3 required places: Town Office, Post Office, and General Store and to the Town Web site as prescribed by Law.

It was expressed that the Zoning Administrator was not paid enough to handle all the current and past violations. The Planning Commission interviewed one candidate who declined the position and 2 others that declined interviews and decided it was not something they wanted to be involved with. It has been difficult to find candidates willing to become our Zoning Administrator at the pay of \$16.00 an hour. It should be noted that the applicants also expressed that they didn't feel they wanted to be subjected to constant harassment in the news media. It was suggested that the Zoning Administrator position be paid more.

Planning Commission Chair also expressed that there was plenty of opportunity for the Zoning Administrator to continue to train or gain more knowledge of the Zoning Bylaw, land use legislation and laws. There is a Zoning Administrator Handbook, and resources such as the Planning Commission, WRC, VLCT etc. and many updated online resources.

Larry Hopkins has an extensive list of violations that he feels are not being properly addressed and/or followed up. His opinion is that there were 20 issues that initially caused the problem in February 2014. Of those 20, 2 were resolved with two permits issued, 11 persons had no permits ever issued although they had built, and 4 permits were allowed in error. He felt that only 2 of 12 violations were addressed properly. The Town lawyer could help in some cases, but with the backlog of cases that have not been resolved, it is an uphill battle. It was proposed in 2014 to spend \$5,000 to work on the backlog of violations, or approximately \$10,000 over 3 years. That has not occurred.

Helyn Strom Henriksen, Acting Zoning Administrator responded that many of the issues Larry keeps referring to were in fact addressed and the records have been

updated and organized in the Town Office. She provided a list of issues that have been resolved. She also is addressing the issue of posting to the web site as the postings are done by the Selectboard Clerk once she receives them from the Commission.

Larry Hopkins: There were questions as to why the DRB met and ruled when, in the eyes of the writer, that not enough information was included. Before any hearing is scheduled, all information on the application must be correct; if not, the application is sent back to the applicant. (This is Larry's opinion).

John Whitman is interested in seeing that our By Law is being followed to the letter. He has written several times to the Selectboard to bring attention to these ongoing problems. Specifically the website, 5 days is the requirement for all information garnered during a meeting or hearing for this information to be in draft form and posted to the web site until an approved document is approved by that particular committee, then the approved minutes are posted to the web site. All must be posted on the website to meet the requirements of Vermont's Open Meeting Law.

Cheri Giddings stated that she felt Readsboro is not a friendly town, people are constantly bickering. New people seeking to live here are struck by the tone of our Town. Felt we should keep the By Law and work to make sure that all these violations are cleared up, and the proper way to go about filling out applications and what is needed to get a permit, etc.

We need new people; unfortunately it is the same people on a lot of boards. But that is because no one appears to want to get involved. No one is stepping forward to volunteer.

There being no further discussion or questions, the Chair stated that the summary and recommendation of the Planning Commission would be forward to the Selectboard for their action. Larry Hopkins stated that he had the next Petition ready to go. He had this next Petition signed in March with the previous one presented to the Planning Commission. Chair commented that perhaps this hearing was a waste of time since only about 5 people on the Petition was at this hearing.

The meeting adjourned at 7:23pm with a Motion by Eunice and seconded by Priscilla, so moved.

Submitted,

Priscilla Margola/Susan Bailey