

TOWN OF SHELBURNE

Planning Board

MINUTES

Regular Meeting ~ May 20, 2025

A duly posted meeting of the Shelburne Planning Board was held at the Town Hall meeting room, on Tuesday, May 20, 2025.

Present: John Wheeler

Will Flanders

Paul Hollings

Faith Williams

Susan Durkee

Absent: None

Administrative Assistant: volunteering Susan Durkee

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. by Chair John Wheeler, who noted the meeting was being recorded.

Minutes

A motion was made by Will to approve minutes of April 15, seconded by Paul. Roll call vote: unanimous; motion passed

Mail, Memos, and Other Correspondence – None; noted that Terry informed John some mail had come for planning board; Susan will follow up. Going forward, Susan will check mail and receive planning board emails.

Reorganization: Discussion about changes. John is interested in stepping down as chair; Faith suggests that for one more year, having the depth of his experience in leadership would be valuable. The Vice Chair could be poised to take over as chair next year. Having an administrative assistant can help lift the load and delegating tasks to the assistant will make another year of serving as chair manageable for John. Motion to approve the slate of officers: John as Chair, Will as Vice Chair and Faith as Secretary. Seconded; Roll call vote: approved unanimously

ANR Plans/Subdivision – None

Zoning Relief/Special Permit Applications – None. Question: can Susan sign for receipt of plans? Susan thinks it needs to be an actual board member; she will check with Terry.

Appointments – None.

OLD BUSINESS

2024 Bylaw Update – John says Faye posted last year's updates on website

Administrative Assistant: Susan has applied for the position and it has been posted, as well, per Town personnel policy. Absent any other applicants, Susan will be the new assistant; if there are other applicants, the process for interviewing and selecting happens. Select Board hires; planning board recommends. New clerk will be hired by July meeting. Until then Susan will serve as volunteer.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of Annual Town Meeting 2025 By-law changes – all three items went well; passed. How long will it take to get them to the Attorney General's office? Last year this happened slowly, and this year it would be good to have that happen in a timely manner. The Town Clerk is responsible for this but the planning board needs to provide evidence of

meetings and public hearings; Faye has done this. Susan will check with Joe to make sure all documents needed from planning

- ADUs – There may be some push-back on the state level about whether residents can have more than one ADU on a lot; our town ADU by-law says that one unit is permitted, whether on a lot with a single-family or multi-family dwelling. If issues arise, this can be revisited next year.
- Short-term rentals – there may be push-back from town residents who have multiple short-term rentals already and want to have as many short-term rentals as they want. The by-law has passed and cannot be amended now. The by-law allows existing non-owner occupied STRs, but no new ones as of July. Question: does the grandfathering of existing non-owner occupied STRs cover a single unit in a building or the building in which it is located? If there is one non-owner occupied STR in a building and other units become vacant, can they also be grandfathered and converted to STRs? This is a question that will be settled should any resident come before the board to ask for this. Intention of by-law is to prevent private equity or investors from buying property to convert to STRs. Revisions to the by-law may be needed as questions like this come up.

BESS

Paul and Faith went to a training on BESSs. Paul reports that what he learned was lithium ion batteries are dangerous; fires are not uncommon; there is necessity for robust preparation for that type of fire. John Taylor was present; he said having BESSs located in rural areas much more preferable because less damaging in case of fire. State control of BESSs now the rule; if our town has a BESS, it is controlled by the state. Our by-law prohibits a BESS in the village districts and if that passes the AG's office, then at least we have that degree of protection in the case of fire. Faith agreed that training for fighting this particular type of fire important, in particular whether or not blankets designed to smother those fires could be used.

Discussion of planning for next year

- Food trucks: Will discussed this with town counsel, and from that conversation realized that the intent/purpose of a food truck by-law was unclear; she suggested meeting with Select Board, people in town to see if there was any interest in regulating food trucks, but it seems there are not concerns being raised in town. Will's concern is that without any regulation more food trucks will come in place of brick-and-mortar restaurants and over time occupy all empty lots in town. Not having regulation sets us up for problems in the future, but if residents are unconcerned, then maybe this isn't really a problem.
- Surveying residents: the planning board could launch a town-wide survey to find out what issues residents feel the planning board should address. Keeping the list of topics to ten (and an "other" option) and asking residents to weigh in on which are most relevant could be a great way to shape next year's planning board work. Online survey links could be posted on flyers, on the town website and in the Two Town News. As a municipality are there guidelines we would need to follow? Having guiding ideas can also help; for example: economic justice, housing security. More conversation about community initiatives would be great. It's a mistake to assume we know what people are thinking and so to make an effort to find out what they are thinking grounds our work.
- Updating Master Plan also important and survey data can inform this work, as well.
- Discussion about the impediments to projects of benefit to the town: the Singley lot an example. Purchased with the intent to develop commercial spaces and affordable residential units, but made economically un-doable by failure to get a zero-interest state loan, despite letters of support from planning board. Raises the question whether or not that lot could still be developed. Cost of construction is really high; the towns that received zero-interest loans were towns with CPC money available, as well. Now that Shelburne has a CPC perhaps that will make it possible to try again successfully. CPC can initiate projects and will be looking at that. One option is to hire someone who can evaluate prospective affordable housing projects (which could include surveying)
- Affordable housing: Important to coordinate efforts with those of the planning board for coherent approach to developing affordable housing. One issue is that small project of just a few units of less interest to the state; larger projects more likely to secure state funding. If school consolidation goes forward and the BSE building I vacated, that is a potential site for a bigger affordable housing development. CPC can spearhead small affordable housing projects. Discuss projects in other towns. Idea focused on large land owners in rural district donating land to town for affordable housing development: difficult to do absent town sewer and water; shared septic and wells harder (and more expensive) to do. FRCOG could help us do an inventory of lots that could be developed. Where are we

in terms of our 10% for 40-B? John thinks 5.4%. Town of Maynard worked with developer to do a mixed-use development to meet their 10%; something like that to keep in mind. Could former site of Posada be developed? Septic issues there. Tax titled properties another possibility. Megan Rhodes from FRCOG could be a great resource for us.

- Shelburne Housing Plan: 2017 housing plan last edited in 2017, this was done by FRCOG –can we ask them to update this? How much would it cost and might that be something CPC could fund? The criticism of this plan was that it was based on data gathered from 100 people who happened to pass through the library. Not a representative sample of the town needs/wishes. If we do this want to get a much broader input from town; 2023 town meeting, light issue was very contentious, but the energy committee went away, did a bunch of work and came back with a plan that passed unanimously. It would be instructive to learn what they did to win the support of so many people. Lots of community meetings and lots of feedback. Instead of doing an affordable housing plan using zoning, work with CPC, get input, plan ahead in the most inclusive way possible. Invite everyone, with attention to those who are the most skeptical. Multi-year plan – no CPC money until next spring. There may be other funding to update the plan. Housing in general and also affordable. Housing plan is 89 pages; important to create an executive summary of key information for people who will not read the whole thing. STR will need to be added. People are in theory supportive of affordable housing but in practice become resistance.
- Business community: Paul asks if there is a way to tap into the needs of the business community. Rural business development pilot program might be a useful connection. Susan will find out where this initiative is in its development and who has been hired to be the coordinator.
- Any ideas from our group for next year? Faith: nothing top of mind wants survey data first. Paul: supporting small businesses

John hands out a schedule created by Liz Kidder that describes the cycle of planning board work.

Paul points out that as we work on the next year's plan, generate questions for town counsel so that we make sure our work in in line with what is legal/possible.

Committee and Regional Project Updates - none

Two Town News – after survey link is created, Faith will work with Susan to draft an article for the July edition

Other business not reasonably foreseen 48 hours prior to the meeting – None.

Public Comments – None

Schedule Next Meeting – The next meeting will be on June 3, at 6 p.m., at the Town Hall.

At 7:50 p.m. a motion to adjourn the meeting made by Paul and seconded by Faith. The vote in favor is unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Durkee
Volunteer Administrative Assistant