

TOWN OF SHELBURNE
Planning Board
MINUTES

Regular Meeting ~ Sept 2, 2025

A duly posted meeting of the Shelburne Planning Board was held at the Town Hall meeting room, on Tuesday, Sept 2, 2025.

Present:

Geoff Stack
Faith Williams
John Wheeler
Will Flanders
Paul Hollings

Absent: none

The meeting was called to order at 6:10pm by Chair John Wheeler

Minutes

A motion was made to approve minutes with corrections of July 29, second; motion passes unanimously

Review of the Mail, Memos and Other Correspondence – email from Joe regarding state approval from State attorney General; approved, save for article 37 regarding Battery Energy Storage Systems, pending receipt of two extra documents. New deadline Nov 30, 2025.

ANR Plans/Subdivision - none

Zoning Relief/Special Permit Applications - none

Appointments: none

Old Business: going forward add unfinished topics from one meeting to old business

New Business:

- (MVP grant – letting recipients know; not in the news yet. Municipal Vulnerability Program; grant from state – to deal with response to climate change or other challenges to the town. \$400,000 to reduce flooding of Dragon Brook; when there are meetings for recipients maybe we can be part of that.)
- Planning for community meetings: different constituencies we want to reach. At last meeting folks agreed to reach out to different groups. John spoke with open space

committee; they just did a plan in 2024; waiting for approval to come back from the state. He looked at the open space 2014 plan; list of things for planning board: lots had to do with research/zoning bylaw revisions (see the plan for the whole list, susan) Nothing on the list felt new to John; see what changes to it the new plan might have. Did John check in with folks at the grange? Didn't ask specifically, but they do host meetings and would likely be willing to host our group and to have it at the grange or at the fellowship hall at the church.

- Paul talked to Andrea Donlon (works for FRCOG and is on Buckland planning board); she said Buckland Planning Board is also in a lull; Paul mentioned our thought to work on a master plan; she thought it would be great. They worked with Dodson and Flinker to do the plan.
- Communities around here could become ghost towns (significantly reduced populations, dwindling commerce);
- Housing repair – poorly funded and quite a need. Montague addressed this with an MVP grant; Westhampton, too – resilience focused. Maybe we need to talk with Tricia about this. Will says he will talk with Tricia.
- Will did not talk to school folks/PTO
- Geoff (and Susan) were gathering data. Discussion about some of the data – 54% of Shelburne households are low income but not clear how many households may have low yearly income but also have wealth or significant financial resources (retirees)
- 40 B - allowing greater density for affordable housing - passed in late 60s. Friendly 40 B is when a housing authority builds a project – still, can have opposition from residents. Will brings up the CPC plan to hire a consultant again as a way to move forward with affordable housing.
- Geoff has been thinking about information: affordable housing requires infrastructure, relationships, and money. Planning board might have a role to play in infrastructure, and maybe we can also work on developing the relationships; can we bring together people to talk about private mortgages, elderly people with space to develop? Faith: good idea/framework; the money is critical though. Right about having conversations within a supportive community about what we want. It's a big question. Andrew Baker is interested in this.
- The King lot next to school – ideas about that got shot down because there hadn't been a broader conversation about the vision going forward, maybe focus on specific lots that are available. Faith: the contentiousness at town meeting re King Lot meeting made her think we need to have more intimate conversations; the school vacancy is seven-ten years out, so not something to focus on in the short run; who in town would bring forward a bylaw about disposing of town-owned properties? Will: if they had asked for \$500 to do a survey, the proposal regarding the King lot might have passed. If the school property becomes a project, the town owns land between the school and the King lot, which is helpful.

- The planning board has pushed for use of town land but the power is with the selectboard per state law. Probably a general bylaw to make it a priority to sell town land for affordable housing; look at that and see if there is more to do.
- We need a process to determine how town-owned land (taken by taxes or otherwise) is used. Public hearing? Can suggest this to selectboard because they have the authority to recommend action. Is there a way to light a fire under selectboard? Paul: Andrew lives across the street and can ask him how we might collaborate with selectboard.
- We should work on the master plan and get money for it. John: we are responsible for drafting a master plan, and square footage of lot sizes. Megan Rhodes suggested adding a definition in bylaws of manufactured homes and multi-family homes; John Taylor wanted definition of multifamily homes in ADU bylaw but we didn't include one. Did Megan have an example of that? Can lift a definition from another town. We have a bylaw that say we can't have a mobile home unless its in a mobile home park. What is benefit of having manufactured home included in the bylaw? Paul agrees to talk with Megan again, to talk to Andrew and to look into master plan idea.
- Will brings up resilience committee again, this time in context of managing the master plan, and wants our master plan to include resilience.
- Faith met the new downtown business coordinator Christian LaPlant; talking with him would be helpful.
- If we have community meetings, what will the focus be and who are the groups: businesses on the trail and rural district; village and village businesses and families. And what about Arts and Culture? What attracts people to down town? Bridge of Flowers is a big draw.
- Geoff: How do we get to the granular info about what people need? How do we open the conversation about affordable housing and what people want for their futures and do we have the housing stock to support that? How do we get to that information? Older folks may not be able to envision a future they may not live to see and younger folks may not see how to grow families in a shrinking, aging town. Relationship development comes back into play: you need at least a few families who agree to stay and commit and if we can figure out what we want, how do we get from here to there?
- Homework: all board members can all look at what Montague and Charlemont and Westhampton did with their new master plans. Will: see if we can develop a housing fund that helps people build an ADU to live in while renting their houses. State community planning grant program, a program that can help fund this kind of work. Exec Office of housing and livable communities. Can we track down map that was made as par of a charette in roughly 2005 or so just for the village on both sides of the river, maybe done by the building association? Will commits to follow up on this. Geoff: Community One Stop for Growth – one cycle per year; next funding cycle begins in January Expression of interest Jan-March; full application done in early may; June submission. He will dig a bit more into this as an option.

- Town scape plan was done by Dodson 1989 (pdf)

Housing (included in above discussion)

Committee and Regional Project Updates

- Open Space committee will have their 10-year plan ready soon
- Nothing regional

Two Town News: nothing needed

Next Meeting's agenda items: report in on master plan homework; folks report in on what they more info about master plan and updating it; we report on items above

Next meeting date: Oct 7.

Closing the Meeting: unanimous to close meeting at 7:47