

Town of Searsmont  
Planning Board Meeting Minutes  
April 2, 2024  
6:30 PM

1. Call to order: The meeting of the Planning Board convened at 6:33 pm. These minutes are a summary of the Board's discussions. A recording of this meeting is available at the Town office.

2. Roll Call - Members Present:

Christian Halsted, Chair  
Sarah Crosby  
Jon Robbins (on Teams)  
John Lightner  
Jack DeGraff  
Jon Thurston  
Evie deFrees

Others:  
Walter Wetmore, CEO  
Kenneth Cox & Gail Gary-Cox  
Rob Hoey, LPI  
Patricia Chapman, Clerk (on Teams)  
Doug Merrifield

3. Applications:

a. The Rage Release on the New England Road:

- i. It has been determined that they do need to add a bathroom to the Rage Room building.
  1. The applicants have adapted the plans to include a bathroom.
  2. The applicants have a letter from a septic designer indicating that the new bathroom can hook into the existing septic.
- ii. The application lists the house as a 3 bedroom but as a rebuild, the applicant is stating it is actually a 2 bedroom. They took out one of the upstairs bedrooms and put in a bathroom.
- iii. They also recently dug up the septic tank and around the pipes to confirm everything was in good shape. The septic tank is not in the location designated on the map. It is closer to the garage than originally indicated.
- iv. The bathroom is mainly for employees but will be available if need for customers.
- v. Paint clean-up is going to be minimal. It's an add-on to regular activities, not a room of it's own. It will be used mainly by underage children who can't shatter glass. They still plan to use buckets of water and rags that they will take home to dump buckets in their sink and wash rags.
- vi. They can add a mop sink to the new bathroom and use that to dump the dirty water buckets from cleaning.
- vii. The paint will be mixed with water and put in water balloons to be smashed. Very small amounts of paint.
- viii. The applicants believe that less than 2 buckets of water will be needed to clean up the paint and the kids. Kids would be wearing gloves and there would only be one at a time.
- ix. The rooms will be lined with wipeable surfaces for easy cleaning.

- x. The state compared their business to a visitor center (based on estimated visitors and length of visits) which estimates 5 gallons of water per day per person. They only have one other permitted business like the Rage Room and it's in an autobody shop so the structure was already there.
- xi. R. Hoey described the requirements for subsurface wastewater disposal is based on the design flows of the facility:
  - 1. Residences are just based on the number of bedrooms – 180 gallons per day plus 90 gallons for each bedroom added.
  - 2. For commercial activity uses a different table (5c) that has several pages listing different types of facilities. Typically, it's 12 gallons per day per employee and then it depends on what type of business it is.
- xii. The applicant plans to use the existing septic for both the house and the garage/business. It is designed for 270 gallons per day.
- xiii. Additional permits will be needed for the external plumbing to hook the business into the septic system. There is a separate permit for the internal plumbing for the bathroom itself.
- xiv. Table 422 indicates the minimum plumbing needs based on their business and required permits. R. Hoey believes they would likely fall under “general business occupancy” which covers everything not listed separately. There are rules about how many bathrooms needed and whether they need to be assigned gender based on occupancy numbers.
- xv. ADA requirements apply to all business regardless of occupancy. Applicants will need to look at those requirements for design of the bathroom (and the whole building).
- xvi. All of the above requirements can be found online.
- xvii. The applicants indicate that the septic tank has been identified. It is closer to the garage than originally estimated. The original tank that was identified was older and no longer connected to the septic system.
- xviii. The septic permit is from 2007 - #976.
- xix. Applicant needs to apply for permits for both the internal and external plumbing.
- xx. If this property is ever sold and the new owners want to have a different business in the garage, they would need to come back to the Planning Board for a change of use.
- xxi. The current application has many revisions and additional documentation tacked on inconsistently – notes written in the margins of a copy of the meeting notes.
  - 1. The board would like to see the floor plan for the garage with the new bathroom included.
  - 2. The applicant needs to meet with W. Wetmore to pull everything together into a packet with the required application pieces and a document addressing all of the individual concerns that have come up around noise, traffic, waste disposal, etc. that has been discussed tonight and over the past few meetings. Provide the revised application to the Planning Board at least 7 days before the next meeting.
  - 3. Identify which of the 12 parking spaces noted on the sketches go with the house and which ones go with the business.

4. They do plan to insulate all of the walls R21 insulations which is a sound barrier and addresses noise concerns.
- xxii. Doug Merrifield is a neighbor of this property and expressed concern about additional traffic and noise. There is an existing issue with speed on the road.
1. There should be minimal additional traffic. No large groups with multiple vehicles, no large trucks.
  2. There will likely not be more than 3 appointments in a day with clean up time in between, etc.
  3. The house on the property will be rented so that would be an additional vehicle or two.
- xxiii. The applicant provided a copy of the letter they delivered to the abutters.
- xxiv. Business hours would be 1 pm -7 pm by appointment only.
- xxv. The Planning Board has no control over speed limits or other road signs.
- xxvi. Ideally, an applicant would meet with the CEO to go over all of these pieces and put together a presentation for the Planning Board. W. Wetmore was away between two of the meetings so the applicants met with Selectmen Redman but he is not a CEO or Planning Board member.
- xxvii. How are/did they change the house from a 3 to a 2 bedroom?
1. R. Hoey is scheduled to do an inspection of the internal plumbing. He will be able to determine if it is single family or will have multiple-apartments, how many bedrooms there are, and whether it meets the requirements of the design of the current system. R. Hoey has been inside the house already but there was work in progress and he did not see all of the rooms.
  2. In some municipalities, the number of bedrooms is determined by the number of rooms with closets but that does not apply in Searsmont.
  3. The Thresher's project had similar issues where verbal changes were made and not documented so there was no way to confirm that everything that was approved was actually done.
- xxviii. Do we need include in the approval that they can't use the exterior spigot for cleaning? That would be a violation. You can use an outside spigot to water your garden. An outdoor shower is required to be attached to a drain. They can't wash off paint or anything outside on the ground.
- xxix. How is it possible to bring in a car that is completely free of oils and fluids? They are working with a garage who should be removing the engine, everything but the shell. The board wants to make sure the cars will be just a shell when it is delivered.
- xxx. W. Wetmore needs to have the complete list of all the questions that have come up tonight and at the previous meetings so everything is addressed when they arrive at the next meeting for the final review.
- xxxi. Do the applicants need to come to the next meeting with approved plumbing permits?
1. No, they just need to know they will need those permits in order to complete the project. The LPI would be responsible for plumbing inspections before occupancy.

2. It would be the CEO's responsibility to follow up on all of the site plan requirements after the fact.
- xxxii. What happens to the rest of the car after it is smashed? Will it be stored on the property at all? Do they transport it away or does someone pick it up? The dumpster will be at his house and not the business. How will he get trash from the site to the dumpster?
- xxxiii. W. Wetmore will put together a document with all of the questions and share with the board for any additional questions or comments and then will address them with the applicants.
- b. We previously had someone request a permit to strip cars on his property. The project was approved but then there were calls from Fish & Wildlife that he was storing cars on state property. It was later determined that he never got a permit for his driveway. The DEP had to inspect the site for proper drainage, etc.
- c. There is someone living on someone's land off Lowry Road (near 100 Lowry Rd) – Christina's Way (map 05, lot 109). He is camping in the hoop house. The gates to the house are locked. Neighbors have noticed because there are lights on in the hoop house. Does he have permission to be there? They seem to have been there about 4-5 days. The owners had advertised for someone to help with their garden so it could be for that? What do they have for toilette facilities? W. Wetmore and R. Hoey will schedule a time to drive by and check on the situation.

4. Approval of Minutes:

- a. J. DeGraff moved to accept the March 5<sup>th</sup> minutes as written. S. Crosby seconded. Motion passed with 6 in favor, 1 abstained (J. Robbins) 0 opposed.

5. Treasurer's report: None.

6. Communications:

a. CEO Report:

- i. One new permit application came in and was approved - 337 Pond Road.
  - ii. W. Wetmore created a spreadsheet of the permits he found back through 2023 and could only identify one project that was complete.
    1. C. Halsted will meet with him to compare and merge his information with the board's existing spreadsheet.
    2. They will follow up on expiration dates of permits. Identify who can request and extension and who needs to reapply.
  - iii. This winter a neighbor of W. Wetmore put in a double-wide trailer on their property. It was for their daughter moving back home and they had plenty of room to do that.
  - iv. Someone at 25 Jericho Road, Map 11 Lot 33, keeps calling to get a building permit to jack up his camp that is under water. He has already hired a contractor. W. Wetmore has told him he needs a floodplain permit.
  - v. Shannon Smith – situation has already been discussed by board; his building also floods. They have a new septic system very close to the lake but that was inspected and approved by the LPI.
  - vi. C. Halsted recommended W. Wetmore contact the state flood plain office.
- b. No new permits added to the Planning Board's spreadsheet this month.

7. Committee Reports: None.
8. Old Business: None.
9. New Business:
  - a. Planning Board projects for the coming year:
    - i. The Comp Plan committee will not likely have projects for the Planning Board to add to their to do list for at least a year or so.
    - ii. Defer the board's discussion about projects until the next meeting. [Unless we have the Rage Room application to review! In that case, we will defer this again. There is no pressure to start a new project right away.]
    - iii. C. Halsted has not gotten pressure from anyone else to do any specific projects.
  - b. There is no new information on the "glamping" project on the Appleton Ridge Road.
  - c. The Selectmen have told C. Halsted that they do not support the LUO changes for LD2003.
    - i. They do not plan to speak against it at the meeting but C. Halsted can not indicate they are supportive.
    - ii. The selectmen have concerns about the state exerting control over the towns but most of the LUO is already based on state rules.
    - iii. The Selectmen approved the funds to have MCOG help create these revisions.
    - iv. If the town votes down the LD2003 changes, the state will not step in and force the changes. The consequences will come if someone wants to build an accessory dwelling unit described in the revised LUO and are denied because it is not in the LUO, the applicant can sue us and will likely win. The town would be responsible for legal fees.
    - v. It gives people more freedom with what they want to do on their property with less fees if they don't need to subdivide to do it.
  - d. Based on preliminary comp plan survey results, the town appears to be split on whether or not to address the issue of short-term rentals (i.e., AirBnBs)
10. Adjournment: C. Halsted made a motion to adjourn, seconded by J. Thurston. Motion passed by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patricia Chapman, Planning Board Clerk

S. Crosby made a motion at the May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting to accept the April 2 minutes as written. J. DeGraff seconded. Motion passed with 6 in favor, 0 opposed.