

Town of Searsmont
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
June 20, 2023
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
Evelyn deFrees
Jon Thurston
Jack DeGraff
Jon Robbins

Others:

Patricia Chapman, PB Clerk

[J. Lightner will provide a letter to the Selectmen expressing interest in being a Planning Board member and then they will appoint him.]

3. Applications:

- a. Map 003 Lot 038, 038-001: 332 Woodman Mill Road, Isaac Parker – 20'x24' 1.5 car garage
 - i. It is 10' from the house and 150' off the road; 20' set back from east side boundary. The application indicates 150' off Rt 131 but the property is on Woodman Mill Road, not Rt 131.
 - ii. The property is not in a shoreland zone.
 - iii. There is a question about the measurements from the side of the house to the garage to the road. Application indicates 60' but lot maps appear to indicate it's only 30' from the house to that side boundary. Requirement is set back 15' from the boundary lines.
 - iv. The lot appears to be 150' wide; 2.33 acres
 - v. J. Degraff made a motion, seconded by C. Halsted, to have C. Halsted contact the applicant to confirm measurements – specifically the distance from the garage to the west boundary line – and that the garage must be at least 15' from the boundary. The board will review again at the July 6 meeting. Motion passed 5 in favor, 0 opposed.
- b. Did the CEO visit all sites that applied for a permit? No, just ones that may have been questionable. Selectmen are not expecting the Planning Board to visit all sites either. If a visit is needed, it does not require the full board and the selectmen are willing to assist with visits as well.
- c. A camp owner on Quantabacook Lake called – 1,000 square foot camp on the Ratten Road (left at the Y); 3rd camp up from the campground when facing the lake. Map 11, Lot 33
 - i. His property floods every year. This year was especially bad. It is a grandfathered non-conforming property that is very close to the water (less than 12' away?). [Apparently, there are hooks in the ceiling of the camp intended to suspend everything from the ceiling during flooding!]
 - ii. F. Therio had previously told him to raise the camp (6' 9") to get out of the flood zone. The owner said he has talked to a contractor about doing this.

- iii. He wants to confirm that, if he decides to do this work, it will not affect his ability to do a 30% expansion in the future. There isn't room to move the camp further from the water. He won't know if he's actually going to do this until he gets a quote from his contractor.
 - iv. Raising the building does not count as part of an expansion as the expansion applies to the footprint; and raising it does not add living space.
 - v. 30% expansion reference is from Shoreland Zone Section 812.3, 2 Non-confirming Structures:
 - 1. The maximum total footprint for the principal structure may not be expanded to a size greater than or 30% larger than the footprint that existed on January 1, 1989, whichever is greater. The maximum height of the principal structure may not be made greater than 15 feet or the height of the existing structure, whichever is greater.
 - vi. The height restriction would need to be taken into consideration when raising the building.
 - vii. Where is the septic system? We are not concerned with this when answering his question about raising the building.
 - viii. C. Halsted made a motion, seconded by J. DeGraff, that based on Section 812.3, above, raising the building will not prevent him from doing an expansion in the future up to 30% of existing footprint. Motion passed 5 in favor, 0 opposed.
 - ix. Questions:
 - 1. Do we need to confirm that the space will not be used for living space or storage? No, it's in the flood zone so it would be able to be used as living space anyway as it would flood!
 - 2. Where did the 6' 9" number come from? F. Therio gave him the number but the board is curious how it was calculated.
 - 3. Where is the flood zone? How is the distance measured? This is not really relevant to his question. More discussion and research can be done if/when he actually applies for a permit.
 - d. C. Halsted made a motion, E. deFrees seconded, that C. Halsted will call the applicant and mention that there are height issues, ask where he got the measurement from, and suggest he look at the ordinance and he come back to us with questions after that. Motion passed 5 in favor, 0 opposed.
 - e. The other issue discussed last meeting on Quantabacook Lake was resolved by DEP. It was a Permit by rule for shoreland stabilization. C. Halsted reviewed the DEP site and found the section that described what this caller was trying to do. Permit by rule says that you file a permit request and after a stated period of time (20 days), if DEP doesn't get back to you, you can go ahead with your project.
4. Approval of Minutes:
- a. C. Halsted moved to accept the June 6, 2023 minutes as amended, J. DeGraff seconded. Motion passed with 5 in favor, 0 opposed.
5. Treasurer's report: None
6. Communications:

a. Building Permit spreadsheet: No update.

7. Committee Reports: None.

8. Old Business:

- a. There was a meeting with MCOG last night regarding the Comp Plan. They had three separate proposals:
 - i. They would do all the work – writing, community engagement, deal with the state review and any corrections, etc. for \$19,500
 - ii. For just the community engagement piece: \$4,000 (facilitate meetings, collect feedback, etc) The town would need to do the actual writing and dealing with the state.
 - iii. To just edit/review the plan - \$2,500 plus \$65/hour – this would include helping with revisions and dealing with state feedback.
- b. There is some room to pick & choose the tasks they would do.
- c. Selectmen are looking for input from the Planning Board:
 - i. It will likely be difficult to get a lot of people involved in the Comp Plan process and responsibility will fall to the same people who are already active on town committees.
 - ii. It seems worth it to have the MCOG group do the majority of the process for \$19,500.
 - iii. Funding:
 1. Could permit application funds be used? Permit fees go into the Planning Board's account to help pay for the CEO, LPI, and the clerk.
 2. Could we use some of the funds on reserve for legal issues? Planning Board has legal reserves but other departments also have reserves.
 - iv. What is their process of soliciting input from the town?
 1. We don't have all the details but they have defined industry standard SOPs this - plans for doing surveys, social media plans, websites, etc.
 2. They want this to be right and won't submit anything without input.
 - v. They know exactly what to do and will be able to guide us through every step.
 - vi. MCOG has already reviewed the previous Comp Plan and have notes about areas that need to be updated. They also have a timeline to help guide the process. August 2025 is the state deadline for a completed plan.
- d. What do we tell community members who question why we need to do a Comp Plan?
 - i. State requires it
 - ii. The pieces are helpful when the town is making decisions about improvements in town.
 - iii. Not having one can count against us when we are trying to apply for state or federal grants for any kind of support. Sometimes they will not review an application at all and sometimes, you just score lower due to not having a Comp Plan.
 - iv. LUO makes references to the Comp Plan so the two documents should be kept up to date and better integrated. MCOG will help integrate the two documents.
 - v. There are several line items in the budget that could potentially contribute to the cost of this plan.

- vi. Comp Plans last 10 years so it costs \$1,950 per year if we choose the \$19,500 option.
- e. MCOG also brought up a Community Resiliency Partnership the town could join – this is a program for planning for potential climate change issues (more rain, more snow, etc)
 - i. Related grants can include funding for Comp Plans
 - ii. You can choose which issues you want to apply for funds so it doesn't have to be specifically called a climate change project.
 - iii. The Selectmen need to make a decision on whether to join this partnership by Friday.
- f. C. Halsted will send a message to the Selectmen about tonight's discussion to let them know the planning board is in favor of joining MCOG's Community Resiliency Partnership and having MCOG take on the Comp Plan project for us. He will offer to have an in-person discussion. E. deFrees is also willing to join a discussion.
- g. There may need to be a vote/town warrant to use the reserved legal fees for the Comp Plan project instead as it was a town vote to create that reserve.

9. New Business: None.

10. Adjournment: J. DeGraff made a motion to adjourn, seconded by J. Thurston. Motion passed by a vote of 5 in favor, 0 opposed and the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Chapman, Planning Board Clerk

J. Degraff made a motion at the July 6 meeting to approve the June 20, 2023 minutes as written, S. Crosby seconded. Motion passed 4 in favor, 0 opposed.