

Town of Searsmont
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
August 1, 2023
6:30 PM

1. Call to order: The meeting of the Planning Board convened at 6:30 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, Vice Chair
Jon Thurston
Jack DeGraff
Jon Robbins
Evie deFrees

Others:
Patricia Chapman, on Teams

George Burton
Walter Lamont

3. Applications:

- a. Sharon Ingraham permit – new tiny house, map 5 lot 30
 - i. Drawing does not clearly show where the house will be placed on the lot.
 - ii. C. Halsted made a motion that he will reach out to the applicant to get a drawing showing the placement of the house and get the dimensions of the house and setbacks. J. DeGraff seconded. Motion passed 6 in favor, 0 opposed.
- b. Walter Lamont permit – barn/accessory building, map 3, lot 1-1 (originally labeled as lot 1-7 but W. Lamont came to the meeting and clarified the situation and edited the permit.)
 - i. 36'x76 Barn/accessory building.
 - ii. It appears to have a 15' setback from boundary with
 - iii. To the left of the driveway right behind the house.
 - iv. Drawing appears to be on lot – lot 1-1, not 1-7 as indicated on the permit; almost 3 acre lot
 - v. J. DeGraff made a motion to hold off on a decision until we can clarify which lot he is actually building on and get the setback information for that lot. C. Halsted seconded. Motion passed 6 in favor, 0 opposed.
 - vi. Walter Lamont arrived at the meeting at 6:50 so discussion was reopened.
 - vii. W. Lamont indicated that he met with the Tax Assessor a few years ago and thought he had merged all of his lots into one but it doesn't appear the changes were made in the town records and on the maps. It appears the assessor may have just changed the classification of the lots for all of them to be farmland.
 - viii. We need documentation that the lots are combined in order to negate the setback issue. He is not sure the deeds were actually changed.
 - ix. Even though he owns both lots, he still needs to conform to the setback requirements if they are still separate lots.

- x. C. Halsted calculated the lot is 300'. W. Lamont will need to show that the building is at least 15' from the lot boundaries.
 - xi. W. Lamont edited the drawing on his permit to show the location more accurately and confirm the setbacks on each side to be at least 15'.
 - xii. W. Lamont asked about plumbing permits. He can get the permit from the town but Camden's LPI is temporarily covering Searsmont for plumbing permits, not the Planning Board.
 - xiii. The permit fee will be \$1,007.60 – 2,736 square feet.
 - xiv. J. DeGraff, made a motion to approve the amended permit, seconded by J. Thurston, Motion passed 6 in favor, 0 opposed.
 - xv. W. Lamont filled out a check that was included with the permit information. C. Halsted let him know the permit would be available to pick up in the morning.
 - xvi. Town office staff will send the permit information to the LPI in Camden for the plumbing part.
- c. George Burton: Map 9, Lot 122
- i. Lives on 13 Belfast-Augusta Road/Rt 3 where New England Road meets Route 3.
 - ii. His garage burned down last year. He noticed that our building permit costs have gone up. Does he get a discount for rebuilding the garage?
 - 1. If he rebuilds on the existing footprint, there is no fee.
 - 2. If he is going to make it bigger, the permit would be for the difference between the original building and the new one.
 - iii. He also has an existing shipping container on the property that he wants to move. Does he need a permit to move the shipping container to a different location on the property?
 - 1. No, as long as he meets all the required setbacks, he shouldn't need a new permit but C. Halsted will check the LUO to confirm.
 - 2. The container will be at least 135' from the road so it is more than the required setback.
 - iv. Shipping container is 8'x40'
 - v. Original garage was 26'x36' (936 square feet) and the new one will be 32'x48' (1,536 square feet). In the future, he may want to build off the sides of it – those will require additional permits.
 - 1. He could just get one permit now for all of it to avoid any potential fee increases if they change before he applies for the next stage of his project.
 - 2. If he gets one permit for all of it, the project would need to be completed within one year or he would need to remember to come back and request a renewal at least 30 days before the 1-year expiration date. If the renewal is missed, the permit expires, a new permit would be required with a new fee.
 - 3. He may wait to request the permit as he has more cleaning and prep work to do before he starts rebuilding.
 - 4. Increase in size from the original building is 600 square feet so permit fee would be \$260.

5. He will try to find someone who can do the ground work and then he will come back to apply. C. Halsted let him know that it is about a 2-week turnaround for permit requests.

4. Approval of Minutes:

- a. C. Halsted – need to add Toni Clark as the owner on the permit (map 3, lot 90) on line 75 of the minutes.
- b. Moving forward P. Chapman will send draft minutes to the Planning Board for review and edits before posting them publicly.
- c. Line 112 – should say “They are **not** intended to chastise...”
- d. J. DeGraff moved to accept the July 18, 2023 minutes as amended above, C. Halsted seconded. Motion passed with 6 in favor, 0 opposed.

5. Treasurer’s report: None

6. Communications:

- a. C. Halsted has received some general questions that would normally be handled by a CEO:
 - i. Emails asking about setbacks for a solar project; a question about a dead gazebo that had fallen into disrepair that the owner wanted to rebuild. Nothing has come of those inquiries since C. Halsted provided the answers.
 - ii. There was a question about occupancy permits – Searsmont has never done them. State law indicates towns under 2,000 population are not required to use them. Occupancy permit is when you get a final inspection after building a new residence.
 - iii. The LPI is doing the initial inspections for plumbing, etc and any necessary inspections during the building process.
- b. The permit spreadsheet is up to date.
- c. C. Halsted is still working on getting the new permits onto the digital maps.
- d. C. Halsted may look into purchasing a projector to make it easier to view the maps together during meetings.

7. Committee Reports: None.

8. Old Business: None.

9. New Business:

- a. MCOG contract for the Comp Plan is ready for the town’s signature and totaled approximately \$14,000.
 - i. We will do our own mapping.
 - ii. It is an itemized contract that clearly states who is responsible for each task in the process.
 - iii. The town will need to have a committee to work with MCOG. Creating the committee is on the task list as a town responsibility.
- b. Thursday night at 6 pm there is a county-wide MCOG planning session focused on housing and housing issues. There are some grants coming up that include funds to help towns do some studies and plans around housing. It does involve some LD2003 related topics. LD2003 needs to be implemented by July 2024 and there are funds

specifically to help towns that have zoning to prep for implementing LD2003.

[Searsmont does have zoning.]

- c. C. Halsted will see about getting additional people on the email list to receive notice of these meetings.
- d. LD2003 is something the board needs to start thinking about and making plans for how it will be implemented. We need to learn more about it and understanding it and figuring out what we need to do.
- e. Permit forms – C. Halsted would like to start spending a portion (1/2 hour) of each meeting starting in September reviewing/editing the permit form. Editing the permit is not something that needs to be a warrant at the town meeting as we are not changing any details in the LUO, just updating the permit to match the existing LUO requirements.
 - i. We need to compare building permit and site plan review forms to the LUO; make sure they are easy to follow; do we want to change fields or the layout, etc.
 - ii. We can provide digital options in addition to paper but we can't eliminate the paper version.
- f. The next meeting is 3 weeks away under the current schedule. If someone has a permit request that can't wait until the first week of September, C. Halsted will review it and approve it if possible and then share the details with the board. Full board approval is not required as normally it would just be done by the CEO without board input.
- g. No update on the CEO search. The selectmen do have a lead on a potential LPI, he just needs to renew his license – he is not interested in the CEO position.

10. Adjournment: J. DeGraff made a motion to adjourn, seconded by E. deFrees. Motion passed by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed and the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Chapman, Planning Board Clerk

J. DeGraff made a motion at the August 15th meeting to accept the August 1 minutes as written. C. Halsted seconded. Motion passed 4 in favor, 1 abstained (J. Lightner), 0 opposed.