

Town of Searsmont
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
October 3, 2023
6:30 PM

1. Call to order: The meeting of the Planning Board convened at 6:29 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
Evie deFrees
Jon Robbins
Jack DeGraff

Others:

Patricia Chapman, on Teams

3. Applications:

a. Continue the Sheep Island permit discussion from the last meeting:

- i. C. Halsted contacted several contractors involved with the project about the board's questions about dimensions and distances, access, shoreland zones, the minor water body, etc.
- ii. They have multiple professionals involved – foresters, architects, etc. They do seem to have everything in order and he did not feel a site visit was required.
- iii. The forestry/vegetation plan for the area within 100 feet of the shore is being handled by a professional forester (Mitch) and he is doing all the plots and calculations that are required and will identify what they plan to cut.
- iv. C. Halsted confirmed that the Planning Board would only approve the cutting of trees specifically for the footprint of the proposed building as required by the building permit.
- v. The path indicated on the plan is temporary, just for the construction period to give access to the site for workers and equipment. They are not putting in a dock. They will be using a barge to bring large equipment over and the "New York Landing" as the launching point. This landing is shared by the island property owners.
- vi. They are working on an agreement with Tim Wilson to get the construction crews over to the island on a daily basis as using his dock would require a shorter boat ride.
- vii. They do have some trees they want to cut for a walking path that will just have woodchips. They also have an area they want to clear for a solar array but they are well outside the shoreland zone.
- viii. The plan shows a small building down by the water that they want to make into a patio and an old outhouse that they mentioned reconditioning. That is within shoreland zoning and the building itself is not salvageable. They will need a new permit to build in that area – it's not included in this permit application. C. Halsted will mention it to them and clarify that they are not part of the building

permit being approved. The current application being reviewed is just for the main structure being built.

- ix. The footpaths are not impervious surfaces so they should not need a permit and they are not included in this application.
 - x. The “minor water body” mentioned in the original plans was actually determined by professionals to be forested wetlands that only require 50’ setback and they are meeting that requirement. C. Halsted also confirms they do have the DEP Permit-by-Rule to cross the wetlands with the walking path and wiring for the solar array.
 - xi. Rob, the LPI, does have some concerns about the septic plans – specifically the path that appears to go over the septic. He will reach out to the applicant or contractors as it is not a Building Permit issue.
 - xii. The forestry plan mentioned above will need to be approved by the CEO (or planning board) before any trees are cut outside the footprint for the building.
 - xiii. The fee is calculated on all the different sections of the building including the patio area and the spaces under the overhang as they are impervious surfaces.
 - xiv. The total square footage is 5,312 = a fee of \$2,706
 - xv. J. DeGraff made a motion to approve the permit application and the calculated fee, S. Crosby seconded. Motion passed 6 in favor, 0 opposed.
- b. Castillo Building Permit; these are the people who asked about a farm stand discussed at the last meeting:
- i. They are just looking for a shed for livestock right now.
 - ii. 200 Square feet (10x20) = \$120 fee
 - iii. J. DeGraff made a motion to accept this permit, J. Thurston seconded. Motion passed 6 in favor, 0 opposed.

4. Approval of Minutes:

- a. Typo on page 4, line 150 – change project to projector
- b. Line 59 - the discussion was about a well and not a septic system
- c. Line 60 is referring to Steve Marin from Vision Builders
- d. J. DeGraff, C. Halsted moved to accept the September 19, 2023 minutes with above edits. Motion passed with 6 in favor, 0 opposed.

5. Treasurer’s report:

- a. The Selectmen did approve the purchase of a projector – C. Halsted sent info to Joanne to place the order.

6. Communications:

- a. C. Halsted did not have any new inquiries or questions.
- b. We have not gotten an application from the Selectmen on a potential new salt shed they are looking at purchasing.
- c. We have not gotten any new information from Boyington about the Fire House Apartments.
 - i. There is some work going on – dirt being brought in and some staging on the back of the building. The board did mention that he should get some erosion control in place.

- d. Bonner-Ganter barn – they had already applied for a permit but it expired before they did the work. C. Halsted told them about the late fee and they indicated they would come in and pay it.
- e. Selectmen have written letters to follow up on 2022 permits that were never paid for.
- f. No changes to the building permit spreadsheet since the last meeting.
- g. The Selectmen shared that they are talking with a potential CEO candidate.

7. Committee Reports: None.

8. Old Business

a. New draft building permit form:

- i. Everyone liked the cover sheet information, feels it is very organized, and likes the information links.
- ii. Is there anything else that should be referenced in the cover sheet?
- iii. We will be printing these forms in house as needed so we can more easily make changes when necessary. The form can also be on the website so individuals can print them.
- iv. There are still a lot of the old forms left over but that won't be an issue when we are printing them in-house.
- v. Should the statement about contacting the town before starting work be more "forceful"?
 - 1. It currently says "It is always best to contact the Town before starting any work on your project."
 - 2. Please contact the town before starting any work on your project. You must get a permit for any project over 100 square feet or there will be a late fee.
 - 3. We need to make sure it's clear the application needs to be approved before starting work or there are additional fees.
 - 4. Add "If your project begins before a permit is acquired, there is a late permit fee as shown below."
- vi. Change the minimum square footage in the chart from 0-1500 to 101-1500 as buildings under 101 square feet do not require a permit.
 - 1. Should we add a statement to the introductory paragraph indicating you do not need a permit for buildings under 101 square feet.
 - 2. We do not want to put too many details in the application that would need to be changed when the ordinance changes. Applicants should reference the LUO directly for detailed questions.
 - 3. Building permits are required for any project over 100 square feet and are needed before starting any work.
- vii. The last page has a place for office staff to stamp received and places for details of the board's decision.
- viii. The table of y/n questions on the last page were initially going to be crossed out based on previous conversations but they actually could be useful for the board and the LPI. (Is driveway required? Septic? Electrical panel?, etc)
- ix. We should make applicant and owner names be plural: owner(s) and applicant(s) in case there are multiple individuals involved.

- x. It's good to have the note about there being no fee for rebuilding after a fire under the fee table.
 - xi. Is it necessary to document the reason for denials on the form?
 - 1. Yes, it is helpful to document, especially when we have a CEO and not all permits will come to the board.
 - 2. Are permits actually denied? They can be if they don't meet the ordinance requirements but generally people adjust to meet the requirements.
 - xii. C. Halsted will make edits and recirculate the form to the board next week. Once the board is in agreement, he will get feedback from the selectmen and office staff as well.
 - xiii. If we get an application that is incomplete and the board can't approve it as is, then the applicant comes back months later with it, it won't matter if we know what happened with the original application as the board or CEO would just evaluate the new request on it's own merit.
 - xiv. Minimum size for a permit is 101 square feet – over, not equal to, 100 square feet.
 - xv. The format of the form is not part of the LUO so these changes just need to be approved by the board and the selectmen, not a town warrant.
- b. Site Plan Form:
- i. There were no suggestions from previous discussions. Does anyone have suggested changes or do we just need to clean up the formatting and make it look more like the new permit application?
 - ii. We could create a cover page similar to the new permit application cover to send people to the appropriate lists in the LUO.
 - iii. The board agrees we should just update it to look more like the new permit draft including a cover sheet with reference links and the back page with space of Office Staff and board decision notes.
 - iv. C. Halsted will work on a draft for the board to review at the next meeting.
- c. Comp Plan Committee:
- i. It would be nice to see some members of the Planning Board on the Comp Plan committee.
 - ii. The selectmen are meeting with Adi Philson (MCOG) on Thursday to review the 13 applications that have been received for the committee. Good mix of new and long-standing residents.
 - iii. C. Halsted will not be on the committee but will be a resource for them.
 - iv. Some members don't feel Planning Board members should be on the Comp Plan committee as the two groups have different goals and perspectives. In the past, there weren't board members on the committee but the board and the committee did meet occasionally.
 - v. If no one from the Planning Board is on the committee, then Planning Board related questions may not get answered appropriately or in a timely manner.
 - vi. C. Halsted will get A. Philson's input about whether Planning Board members should be on the committee or if the board should just be a resource and meet with the committee regularly.

- d. During the last the Comp Plan update, the committee didn't meet all that often but there was a very active leader who did a lot of the work. We have A. Philson and MCOG this time to lead the committee.
- e. The first Comp Plan committee meeting will be October 25.
- f. October 18 is a special town meeting to discuss buying a sand/salt lot for a new salt shed out on the New England Road near the pipelines. 35 acres.
- g. Town needs to come to the Planning Board for a site plan for the new property before they actually make the purchase.
- h. Next meeting is 10/17 unless there are no new permits – in that case C. Halsted will cancel the meeting. Phone and email inquiries have definitely slowed down.

9. New Business: None.

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 7:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Chapman, Planning Board Clerk

E. deFrees, made a motion at the November 7 meeting to accept the October 3, 2023 minutes as written. J. Thurston seconded. Motion passed with 5 in favor, 1 abstained (J. Lightner), 0 opposed