

Town of Searsmont
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2022
7:00 PM

1. Call to order: The meeting of the Planning Board convened at 7:07 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 Guy Hamlin	Others: Patricia Chapman, PB Clerk
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3. Applications: None.
4. Approval of Minutes:
 - a. J. Thurston moved to accept the September 6, 2022 minutes as written, S. Crosby seconded. Motion passed with 4 in favor, 0 opposed.
5. Treasurer's report: None.
6. Communications:
 - a. CEO Report: F. Therio is not in attendance.
 - i. F. Therio said he did not have anything to report this month but will have a new and improved report next month.
 - b. Building Permit spreadsheet:
 - i. P. Chapman is working on updating the permit spreadsheet – there are several new ones in the file.
7. Committee Reports: None.
8. Old Business: None.
9. New Business:
 - a. New sign ordinance: Section 606.3 Illumination
 - i. J. Thurston has several notes on the full sign ordinance as well (there are several inconsistencies, etc). We will wait to have a more in-depth discussion about the whole sign section (606: Signs) when there are more members present.
 - ii. The new section of the sign ordinance (Section 606.4 Electronic Message Boards) was somewhat rushed and deserves more discussion of the details. There are concerns about illumination – flashing lights, etc – as it's written.
 - iii. There are complexities around different size signs in different zones around town.
 - iv. The ordinance should be as easy to understand and enforce as possible. Our current ordinance is too complex. 606.3 F, #3 says "The luminaires must not

- collectively exceed 10,000 mean lumens.” How would that be measured and enforced?
- v. 606.3 F is about illuminating flags. Why is there a discussion about flags in the sign ordinance? Is there anywhere else about flags? Does it fit anywhere else?
 - vi. Illumination of the sign itself vs illumination directed at the sign. 606.3 is about illuminating signs and 606.4 is about illuminated signs.
 - vii. Section 606.3, A: A steady, stationary light(s) of single color, shielded and directed solely at the sign and not casting light on the premises.
 - viii. Section 606.3, B: Interior, non-exposed, white lights or reasonable intensity. This statement has a typo, it should read “...**of** reasonable intensity.” How do we define “reasonable”? What is meant by “interior”? The signs own internal illumination.
 - ix. Section 606.3, C: Neon to be illuminated may be only used for window signs that do not exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the window area in which it is located and must be non-blinking.
 - x. 606.3 C needs to be moved? Separate section?
 - xi. Section 606.3, D: Exterior lighting shall be limited to illuminating the immediate premises, and direct light shall not project onto adjacent residential properties or be directed skyward. If necessary, direct light shall be shielded by blinders and additional buffering/screening. This should also be moved?
 - xii. Drop section E (Signs may be illuminated only by shielded, non-flashing lights) as redundant of section A.
 - xiii. 606.3 F F. The lighting of federal or state flags shall be exempt from the requirements of this section providing that the following criteria are met: 1. The light is a narrow beam aimed and shielded to illuminate only the flag. 2. Upward aiming luminaires are placed as close to the base as possible. 3. The luminaires must not collectively exceed 10,000 mean lumens.
 1. This doesn't fit in this section?
 2. Other towns have defined externally illuminated and internally illuminated signs. Sections A and B above seem to make these distinctions.
 - xiv. Why does section C specify 25% of window space when we have specific sign size limits in other places? The other sign size restrictions might not be restrictive enough if they have a large window.
 - xv. 606.1 also talks about glaring sign illumination. How would that be defined?
 - xvi. We could check with sign vendors to find out how illumination is measured.
 - xvii. Town of Camden specifies the purpose of their illumination restrictions as preserving natural and scenic beauty of the town... where prolific advertising and other signs would spoil the beauty of the town and create hazards... by regulating type, number, location, and size of signs”
 1. We have size covered and location
 2. We have restrictions on number of signs
 3. We would need to figure out the types
 - xviii. We do have some sign types specified. Do we need more types defined?
 - xix. Do we need the new Section 606.4 Electronic Message Boards as a separate section or could it fall under internally illuminated signs and just list what they can't do?

1. Is there value in being vague? If it's vague, the Planning Board can do a site visit and make a decision about whether illumination seems too bright or not.
 2. C, 2: Must change as rapidly as technologically practicable with no phasing, rolling, scrolling, flashing, or blending.
 3. Reference Town of China's ordinance:
 - a. Electronic message signs are permitted only on state roads. Only one sign is permitted per premises. They must be a single frame of text or graphics which may be changed with a minimum hold time of 10 seconds. If they only display time and temp, a minimum hold time of 2 seconds. Frames shall contain static images with no flashing, intermittent or moving lights. Scrolls may be used if light does not vary in intensity. All message signs must be turned off between 10 pm and 6 am unless the business is open for business during that time.
 4. What is the difference between a free-standing sign and an electronic message board? Size requirements are inconsistent within Section 606.1 and other sections of 606. Awning and canopy signs have not size restrictions.
- xx. No temporary signs can exceed 6 square feet.
 - xxi. Should we sort the sign discussion by sign types, number, size, and location to rewrite the whole section 606.
 1. Type would differentiate between internal and external illumination and temporary vs permanent signs.
 2. Free standing vs projecting (off a building) signs.
 - xxii. Do we need obvious statements such as "excludes public safety signs" and specifying distances from public ways?
 - xxiii. Do we need a prohibited section in addition to what is allowed? We should be able to word things so that if it's not mentioned, it is prohibited. State that anything not listed in this section is prohibited and not list prohibited things.
 - xxiv. 606.1 will be permitted sign types:
 1. Types could include internal vs external illumination and permanent vs temporary signs
 2. Under each type, we would list requirements and restrictions about size, illumination, number, and location, etc.
 3. Would the information work better in a chart?
 - xxv. If there were things that should apply to all signs, section 606.2 will be a paragraph that says "These apply to all signs:" – adjust wording to be proactive – i.e., "No sign shall be closer than 8 feet of any property line" would be "Signs must be at least 8 feet from any property line."
 - xxvi. We do have a definition of "Sign" but may need to add definitions for specific types of signs such as "Free standing sign".
 - xxvii. Prohibited list may need to stay. Could someone justify their inflatable sign as meeting the requirements for a free-standing sign if it is less than 20 feet high and 16 square feet of surface area?

- xxviii. Change 606.1 C where it says only one free standing sign per lot because G says there can be two on lots over 500 feet.
- xxix. 606.1 Permitted signs = types of signs
 - 1. Section A would be current A, B, C, and F will be the types – wall, projecting, free standing, etc
 - 2. B would be illumination
 - 3. C would be size
 - 4. Current E-K will be incorporated into the details of each type
- xxx. OR 606.1 Permitted sign types
 - 1. Section A would list different types and under each type, specify illumination, size, etc.
- xxxi. Keep section J but the height stated could be different. Do we need a maximum height stated? If no, delete section J. Do we need a minimum height? On a wall sign, no? On a projecting sign, maybe? Is the concern for projecting signs about people bumping their heads or trucks fitting under? Reduce to 8 feet instead of 10 for a minimum.
- xxxii. Section E will be moved into the section on prohibitions.
- xxxiii. 606.2 Other provisions related to permitted signs:
 - 1. No temporary signs will exceed 6 square feet
 - 2. Signs relating to trespassing
 - 3. Does K (32 square foot) need to exist? Are any other 32 square foot signs allowed besides a business?
- xxxiv. Is temporary a specific type of sign? Or can any type of sign be temporary?
- xxxv. What is the definition of a free-standing sign? Is it temporary by default as it could technically be moved at any time as it's not attached to anything?
- xxxvi. Signs require permits? Yes. If you get a permit for a business, is a separate fee required for a sign permit as well?
- xxxvii. K is specific to businesses as many personal properties do have non-business signs and they would be restricted to 16 square feet. Do we need more clarification distinguishing between business and personal signs?
 - 1. A commercial business on a state road is allowed to have a 32 sq. ft. free-standing sign at without fee – is this last part “at without fee” a typo?
- xxxviii. Wall signs are the same restriction (20% of wall space) whether it's personal or business.
- xxxix. Clarify section A to be 16 sq feet for personal signs and 32 sq feet for businesses and drop K.
 - xl. 606.1 H and 606.2 H conflict – one allows signs relating to trespassing and hunting and the other prohibits any signs on trees. Strike 606.2 H prohibiting signs on trees as trespassing signs are generally on trees.
 - xli. Edit 606.2 A to remove “except traffic and similar public safety signs, official business directional signs” so that no permanent signs can be located in the public right of way. 606.1, i, already allows public safety signs without restriction.
 - xlii. 606.2 B will be reworded in a positive frame and moved to 606.1.

- xliii. 606.2 G can be dropped based on rewording section A. We do not have concerns with people having signs relating to goods and services not sold on the premises.
- xliv. Clarify illumination by defining internal vs external illumination.
- xlv. Camden's ordinance clarifies internal illumination as "projecting ... sign whose light shines through a plastic covering or translucent covering".
- xlvi. Can electronic message boards be rolled into illumination?
- xlvii. Electronic message board can't be a separate type of sign in section A as it could be any one of the existing types (free-standing, projecting, etc).
- xlviii. Details for the electronic message boards could be put into the new section "Other Provisions". If any type of sign is a changeable, electronic sign, then they have to meet these things... need to decide how often they can change, etc. and list the details here.

[G. Hamlin left for a family emergency at 8:37 pm]

- xlix. Changeable sign is creating it's own illumination vs being illuminated by an external light.
 - I. P. Chapman will draft a new section 606 from tonight's notes to use as a start at the next meeting.
- b. C. Halsted will be talking to the Selectmen about P. Chapman continuing to be the Planning Board Clerk remotely. She could take notes remotely and the town office staff would be willing to distribute printed copies as needed.

10. Adjournment: J. Thurston made a motion to adjourn, seconded by S. Crosby. Motion passed by a vote of 3 in favor, 0 opposed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Chapman, Planning Board Clerk

C. Halsted made a motion at the November 1, 2022 meeting to approve the October 4, 2022 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by J. Thurston. Motion passed 2 in favor, 2 abstained, 0 opposed.