

Town of Searsmont
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
December 5, 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
Jon Thurston
Sarah Crosby
Jon Robbins
John Lightner
Jack DeGraff
Evie deFrees, Vice Chair

Others:
Walter Wetmore, CEO
Selectman Redman
Dave Marceau

Patricia Chapman, Clerk (on Teams)

3. Applications:

a. Building Permit Applications:

i. Planning Board is still currently reviewing permits until the Selectmen decide the new CEO should take over.

ii. Firehouse Apartments permit application:

1. The CEO reviewed the permit but did not calculate the fee accurately.

There will be no change to the building foot print so it is a flat fee of \$50.

2. S. Crosby, moved to approve the permit, J. DeGraff seconded. Motion passed 7 in favor, 0 opposed.

3. CEO questions:

a. The Zoning – commercial vs residential. Neighbors on one side are commercial and the other side is residential. Does there need to be a “screen” between the sites? Zoning is different than tax designations of residences vs commercial properties. The town center is a separate zone – Village Core – which is neither commercial nor residential.

b. Will the applicant be building a wall or divider between the parking area and the neighboring property?

i. The applicant and neighbors did discuss putting up a fence at one of the application review meetings.

ii. It is part of the CEO's responsibility to follow up on projects to confirm they were completed in accordance with the original permit.

iii. The CEO should review the permit application and the meeting minutes and then contact the applicant directly with additional questions

- c. C. Halsted and/or the Planning Board can help with any questions about the LUO..
- b. Minor Site Plan Review Requirements Section 1102.4: Town of Searsmont sand/salt shed
 - i. This meeting is to determine if the application is complete and if any additional information will be needed by the board for the official review. If this is approved, the board will need to discuss public hearing, site walk, and a date for the follow up meeting.
 - ii. Major vs minor plan – the project is over 5,000 square feet so it is a major plan.
 - iii. Item A: The application was submitted 7 days prior to this meeting.
 - iv. Item B: Copies of the plans were distributed to the board members.
 - v. Item C.
 1. We have the fully executed copy of the application for review. The board is comfortable with the cover letter satisfying the requirement of a signed application.
 2. P. Chapman submitted letters to be distributed to the Road Commissioner and Public Safety Officials for comment.
 3. General Information:
 - a. Name and address of applicant and property address are all included.
 - b. Name of the proposed development is included.
 - c. A list of names and addresses of abutters was included.
 - i. The board checked the map to confirm they were all included. The tax assessor supplied the abutter list to the Selectmen.
 - ii. The letter did let abutters know there was a meeting but did not specify the project details that would be discussed or why they were being notified. The Clerk can provide letter templates to applicants upon request.
 - d. Sketch map showing the general location of the project was included.
 - e. Boundaries of adjacent properties owned by the application – does not apply as town doesn't own abutting properties
 - f. Map and lot numbers were included – Map 8, Lot 55 & 57
 - g. A purchase and sale agreement was included to demonstrate the applicant's ownership or interest in the property.
 - i. The board will not be able to provide an official approval by the purchase and sale deadline of Dec 15th .
 - ii. Deeds are usually provided with listing details but actual title research is usually done before the closing. The Selectmen will provide a copy to be included in the file.
 - h. Name, registration number of any professionals involved with preparing the plan:
 - i. This application includes a sketch but not an actual plan. We should be reviewing an actual plan.

- ii. There are several edits (penciled changes) to details on the sketch. Are these the final details?
- iii. The building locations on the sketch are not exact but the circled area is where they plan to develop. The buildings will be within the circle but not necessarily in the exact locations shown on this sketch.
- iv. Revised numbers have been penciled in on the chart of Lot Coverage.
- v. We need to have a final complete plan to review prior to the meeting where the final decision will be made.
- vi. MSW stands for Municipal Solid Waste
- vii. **This is not a complete site plan. Section 1102.4, 3, h has not been satisfied.**
- viii. Does the town have a timeline on when a final plan will be available? The professionals that will prepare the final plan are working on getting out to the site to make their own inspection vs using existing topographical maps and information. There is no estimated date yet.
- ix. The Firehouse apartment project was different because the buildings were existing. He also did include distances from the proposed driveway and parking to the boundaries.
- x. As a major site plan, we will be requiring additional professional plans – engineering studies...
- xi. Section 4 b requires bearings. Are the distances on this sketch accurate and to scale? They will be accurate per the deed on the final plan.
- xii. It appears an original survey pin may have been covered by the woods road that was put on the property in the past so a new pin was set outside of the roadway.

4. Section C 4: Existing Conditions

- a. Zoning classifications and zoning districts and boundaries – it is in a rural area and does not cross multiple districts.
- b. The board will need bearing and distances of all property lines on the final plan.
- c. Location and size of any sewer and water mains, culverts and drains:
 - i. Gartley & Dorsky could not find the stream but there is a culvert on the property. The area is definitely wet but there does not appear to be any running water. The stream appears to flow to the east so drainage would flow toward/under the road.
 - ii. There is a culvert planned for under the access road but it is not noted on this sketch. That would need to be included on the final plan. Additional culverts may be needed. If they are, they will need to be included on a final plan.

- d. The sketch does include names of existing streets adjacent to the proposed development.
- e. Existing location of all buildings – we do have draft locations on the current sketch but want to make sure they are accurately represented on the final plan.
 - i. The contractor who goes to get sand will have a loader along to move the sand from the shed to the trucks.
- f. There are no existing driveways, streets, parking, etc on the site.
- g. Location of intersecting roads or driveways within 200 feet of the property: the Woodbury lot has a house and driveway so that needs to be noted on the plan as well as driveways for any other neighboring properties within 200 feet of the property.

[The town already has the necessary DOT and DEP permits. Copies will need to be provided with the final application.]

- h. Open drainage courses, stands of trees, and natural features need to be identified There is more than enough wetland information on the sketch. The aquifer is also noted on the plan.
 - i. Direction of surface water drainage – contours on the sketch imply the direction of drainage but the final plan should have more definite notations.
 - j. Existing signs – there are none and no new ones are planned.
 - k. General description of soils – There is a note about PBB soil where the sand/salt shed will be located. There are other types of soil on the site and they should be noted in the area that will be developed. A description of the soil should be included in addition to the soil code.
 - l. Location of easements, copies of covenants and deed restrictions – there are none.
 - m. No portion of this property is in the 100-year floodplain.
 - n. There is no existing septic system so this doesn't apply. There is no plan to install a septic system. The plan is to use porta-potties – is this acceptable? We need follow up with the LPI. This will be an above ground holding tank.
5. Proposed Development Activity
- a. Ground floor elevations – we need this information on the final plan.
 - b. Setbacks need to be on final plan
 - c. Proposed driveway, walkways, etc – they are indicated on the sketch but should be finalized on the final plan. The entrance and the whole developed area will be paved. This needs to be noted on the final plan.
 - d. Water supply - There will not be a water supply for the building but they do plan to drill a well for the fire dept's use to replace supply lost in the Business Park.

- i. There is a well at the existing fire dept site but it is only used for drinking water now. It is not clear if it is acceptable for firefighting use (gallons/minute, etc).
 - ii. Other hydrants in town? Not useable?
 - iii. Ideally, the water system should be located at another site if possible. Due to the aquifer, a well could create a direct route to potential contamination.
 - iv. Doing it at the existing fire dept site would require digging up a lot of asphalt to install the underground tanks.
- e. Illumination and outdoor lighting – there will be exterior lights on the sand/salt building.

[Will the access road have a gate? Yes but it will be back from the road so people don't have to park on the road if there is a line.]

- f. Incineration devices – none planned.
- g. Location of any machinery that may make noise - loader may be noisy, the location is noted.
- h. A report from a licensed site evaluator is not applicable – there is/will be no sewage system.
- i. There are no plans to store any waste or chemicals outside buildings.
 - i. There will be dumpsters filled with bagged waste. Transfer station is open on Saturdays and the transporting company picks it all up on Mondays. The town may be moving toward a compactor that would only need to be emptied once per month. The compactor would be a closed container but it would require power.
 - ii. The natural gas transfer station across the street has power.
 - iii. Transfer station is a secondary interest for the property. Sand/salt shed is the primary interest.
- j. Proposed landscaping and buffering – there are some notes about the landscaping around the buildings.
 - i. The board would like more notes about landscaping around the edge of the planned pavement.
 - ii. They plan to leave the vegetation between the main road and the developed area and line the road with large boulders.
 - iii. They have a representative from the mill coming out to see if they would be interested in any of the trees that need to be cleared to put in the buildings.
 - iv. They plan to clean up dead wood and select cut around the improved area.
 - v. Gartley Dorsky will include plans for landscaping to help with erosion control, etc.

- k. Copies of applicable state approvals and permits – see above – additional permits will be needed for wetland impacts
 - l. Schedule of construction including start and end dates – we have broad estimates.
6. Major plans shall also include:
- a. Development plan with space for board signatures
 - b. Accurate scaled plan
 - c. Storm water and erosion control plan – will come with Gartley & Dorsky’s final plan.
 - d. Utility plan – some info is on current plan but more detail is needed in the final plan.
 - e. Planting schedule keyed to the site including general varieties and sizes of trees and shrubs, etc.
 - f. Traffic data – DOT addressed this in their letter with the permit that will be provided with the final packet.
 - g. Location, width, grades and profiles of proposed streets and sidewalks – a sample was included but it needs to be drawn for this site.
 - h. Construction drawing for streets, sewers, water storm drains – needs to be in final plan
 - i. Copies of deed restrictions and covenants – none planned
 - j. Written offers of dedication or conveyance to the municipality –
- [The section designations on the application don’t match the LUO. Section I was inserted on the application.]
- k. Cost of development - \$800,000; still need finance details
 - l. Telecommunications facility - does not apply
 - m. Scenic resource plan – final plan needs to have front views, height of buildings, etc.
7. Racetrack does not apply
8. Submission waivers – the board is not entertaining any waivers.
- vi. C. Halsted motioned not to accept this plan as complete, seconded by J. Lightner. Motion passed 7 in favor, 0 opposed.
 - vii. C. Halsted offered to assist the selectmen with getting the plan ready for final review.

4. Approval of Minutes:

- a. Draft minutes include a correction that was entered after the fact
- b. J. DeGraff moved to accept the November 21, 2023 minutes as written with the added correction. J. Robbins seconded. Motion passed with 6 in favor, 1 abstained (E. deFrees) 0 opposed.

5. Treasurer’s report: None.

6. Communications:

- a. .CEO Report – W. Wetmore

- i. Clarification about fees – permit fees are calculated based on the increase in the footprint of a building regardless of the change of use. If renovations are done that do not change the footprint, the fee would be a flat \$50.
 1. A commercial site that changes to a different commercial use isn't necessarily a change of use.
 2. Fees are occasionally reviewed and can be done at any time. The Planning Board does not make the changes but makes recommendations to the Selectmen to make the final decision.
 - ii. Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is not required by the state based on the population of the town. The Planning Board could choose to be more restrictive than the state and require a CO but has chosen to keep things simple and match the state requirements.
 - iii. Insurance companies may have different or additional requirements. CEO can confirm that a building meets the towns LUO requirements.
 - iv. How much enforcement can the CEO realistically handle?
 - v. The process is for the CEO to follow up on permitted projects but it hasn't been happening consistently in the past; particularly during the time when there wasn't a CEO
 - vi. For some towns, the Certificate of Occupancy can also be a trigger for the Tax Assessor to know there were changes that need to be evaluated.
 - vii. R. Hoey will be staying on as the LPI. He and W. Wetmore can and should work together.
 - viii. Electrical work:
 1. Electrical inspections are not required on residential projects. Commercial projects need a permit from the state and they don't always do an inspection.
 2. A Master Electrician has to install electrical panels or CMP will not come out and approve them.
 - ix. W. Wetmore works in the office on Mondays and Wednesday from 8 am to 2 pm. Except for the hour the office closes for lunch.
- b. There are fire hydrants at the mill and two fire pumps that could be options for the Fire Dept to use? There are ways to access water from the St. George River or Quantabacook Lake. A cistern could capture water from roof runoff.
 - c. Building Permit spreadsheet is up to date
 - d. C. Halsted talked to the applicant's representative (J. Loomis) for the Sheep Island project. He questioned why the board wanted to visit the site and he has not gotten back to C. Halsted about scheduling a date. There is some question about whether they plan to start the project right away. They did not plan to work on it over the winter. They may be waiting to set up a visit when they are closer to starting work. We should reach out again in the spring.
 - e. Town office staff are working on a system for organizing permit applications on paper and eventually electronically.
 - f. The Planning Board handling building permits has made the process and enforcement more consistent. There is some discussion about that responsibility staying with the Planning Board. There would still be plenty of work for the CEO with inspections and enforcement, etc.

- g. Working with applicant's does not need to be adversarial. Using the Planning Board makes it less of a burden on one person to make and justify decisions. It is a group decision.

7. Committee Reports: None.

8. Old Business:

- a. The office staff have not returned any feedback on the new permit and site plan forms.
- b. Selectmen requested information about driveways and roadways put back on the form:
 - i. Approval from Road Commissioner or Board of Selectmen
 - ii. Culvert: yes or no; diameter?
- c. The road and driveway are not required for a building permit. We don't request copies of permits for septic systems or utility poles. These items are completely separate from the Building Permit and the town may want a separate form for them.
- d. Do driveways need to be dealt with in the LUO? Driveways could be added to table 703 as a use if the Selectmen want the CEO involved. This could be a future discussion.
- e. The plan is to implement these new permit forms as of January 1st.

9. New Business:

- a. December 19th we will be working on LD2003 with MCOG – we will not be doing the usual Planning Board business (reviewing permits, etc). They have provided C. Halsted with the proposed changes we will be discussing on the 19th.
- b. We will schedule a public hearing after we have reviewed the changes (Jan or Feb).
- c. The board will continue to meet twice per month while we plan for the town meeting even if building permit responsibility reverts back to the CEO.

10. Adjournment: J. DeGraff 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 8:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Chapman, Planning Board Clerk

J. Lightner made a motion at the January 2, 2024 meeting to accept the December 05, 2023 minutes as written. E. deFrees seconded. Motion passed with 6 in favor, 0 opposed.