

Shaftsbury Planning Commission
September 13, 2016

Came to order: The meeting came to order at 7:03 pm. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Briece Della Rocca, and Mike Foley; Select Board chair Tim Scoggins; BCRC executive director Jim Sullivan; and ZA Shelly Stiles. Commissioner David Mance was absent.

Minutes: Mr. Foley moved to adopt the August 23, 2016 minutes. Ms. Della Rocca seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.

Unresolved bylaw revision issues:

The commission discussed whether the two VC districts should be combined and whether the more permissive language re uses in existing VC 2 (which permits restaurants and retail) should apply across the combined district, as well as various permutations of that option. It was agreed that the state's onsite septic regulations would limit the size and type of restaurant and retail. Mr. Williams said the commission had analyzed the VC zones in the past and decided that, with public water and onsite septic, the smallest viable lot size would be one-half acre. Just what "mixed use" is was discussed. Ms. Della Rocca wondered to what extent permitting a larger number of uses in a combined VC would move the needle closer to the visions incorporated in the Town and Economic Development Plans. Mr. Williams reminded the group that the time horizon for any revision is a long one. Mr. Scoggins said he'd wondered whether the issue should be put to the voters in two parts; one vote on a cleaned-up bylaw without potentially controversial changes; and a second vote on those controversial changes. Ms. Della Rocca said she needed more information to be able to make a case for what might be a controversial change to the voters. Mr. Foley suggested that the more permissive VC district include a definition of minimum lot size and a statement of permitted hours of operation. The issue was not resolved.

For a later agenda: whether to delete the condition re professional offices that the exterior of the building not be significantly changed.

Re requirement that a licensed design professional prepare the site plan: the Select Board had expressed some misgivings about this provision, as it could increase the cost to the applicant. As to how to address those misgivings, it was suggested that exemptions could be offered where ZA and/or DRB found the application complete no matter the preparer; for residential projects; for a simple change of use, or where there are no significant changes to drainage, topography and other features. Mr. Sullivan suggested it could be required whenever site plan review is required except where there are no significant changes. Ms. Della Rocca said the commission should plan on educating the citizenry as to why such a requirement is important, e.g.: in trying to protect an applicant from additional costs the Town could threaten its own objectives, threaten the rights of the applicant's neighbors, or lose the trust of its taxpayers (as when poorly planned businesses open and then fail, and open and then fail). Mr. Williams will try to find out what the additional cost might be. Mr. Sullivan will try to craft some draft language. Ms. Della Rocca will try to find out if the Small Business Bureau can help.

Industrial districts, especially a new low impact industrial zone where Eagle Square and T&M are located: Should it be a new zone, or should it be combined with the existing Commercial/Industrial zone? (And as an aside, should the Industrial and Industrial I zones east of 7A have the same uses?) Mr. Sullivan pointed out a C/I zone could allow a Costco's. Mr. Foley spoke in favor of a Trader Joe's or a brewery. The discussion ended inconclusively, although there seemed to be agreement that the neighbors of the former Eagle Square should be protected from highly impacting industrial uses.

Other business: Mr. Williams told of the Kingdom Trails operation in East Burke (for mountain bikers) which has turned the little community around. About 70 participating landowners, none receiving compensation, make the program possible. SW Vermont hasn't learned how to monetize the outdoors despite its enormous recreational potential.

The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 9:15 pm.

Notes by ZA Stiles