

Shaftsbury Planning Commission meeting
January 23, 2018

The meeting came to order at 7 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Mike Cichanowski, and Mike Foley. Zoning administrator (ZA) Shelly Stiles was also present.

Mr. Foley moved to adopt the January 9, 2018 minutes. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.

The commission reviewed the ZA's report. Ms. Stiles elaborated upon her desire for a color copier. Regarding violations, she updated the commission on a tiny house issue on Rt. 7A. (Stiles will search the state's online wastewater permit files to see if a permit is in hand for it.) Mr. Williams suggested the ZA not only respond to violation complaints, but actively monitor for violations. The commission will report to the Select Board its wish that the Select Board reappoint Ms. Stiles for another year.

The commission moved to "other business" on the agenda to discuss a notice all had received re an Act 250 minor application for a parking area for the TAM facility at the corner of North and Airport Roads. Ms. Stiles notified them that the DRB had approved their application with conditions. The presence of a stream, stormwater treatment via a sand pit, a curb cut on Airport Rd., and increased hauling maximum limits were all discussed. The commission agreed it was not interested in intervening in the application.

Revisions to bylaw: hostel.

The commission discussed further changes to the definition of hotel and hostel, the text of which is incorporated in these minutes. Mr. Williams noted that the reference to upgrading the facility to Vermont Commercial Buildings Energy Standards could be challenged, as the law itself seems to say that upgrades are necessary only where energy use will increase as a result of the change of use.

The commission discussed likely impacts of adopting the law. The ZA would have to maintain a record of inspections by Fire Safety or Town health officer. The Iron Kettle might have to hire an on-site manager. The energy requirement could be challenged.

Mr. Foley reminded the group that at the last meeting they'd discussed what makes a former motel a hostel, that is, how many units must be available to the traveling public? (In practice, the changeover in any one motel is likely to be gradual.) Perhaps a minimum of 51% of units must NOT be available for rental by the traveling public? Mr. Williams will edit the definition of hotel/motel to accomplish this goal, as in "50% or more of the guests are members of the traveling public."

The Commission will want to discuss these developments with Brian Lent of Peckham Industries.

Tiny house developments:

Mr. Cichanowski had no information to share on tiny houses. Mr. Williams wondered if the separation of uses, an early core pillar of zoning, had perhaps been taken too far. Is "cottage tourism" compatible with residential neighborhoods? (An economic argument will need to be made, and persuasively, to convince townsfolk that such a change would be a good one.)

Mr. Foley suggested that before permitting tiny house developments, we should clarify just what is happening with the AirBNB movement, and how the Town wishes to approach it. Mr. Cichanowski noted that to permit it is to carve out in a residential zone an opening for a commercial venture.

Mr. Foley noted that AirBNB owners do not pay rooms and meals tax, nor are their properties assessed at a commercial value (thereby benefiting the Town).

The ZA will research what the state is doing re AirBNB. She will ask the listers how the Town assesses inns and bed and breakfast establishments to learn what we might be missing by permitting AirBNB. She will check out the statewide ZA listserv to learn what others around the state are doing about this matter.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Notes by ZA Stiles