

Shaftsbury Planning Commission

November 23, 2021

Call to order

The PC meeting came to order at 6:11 p.m. Present in person were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Naomi Miller, and Martha Cornwell; and zoning administrator Shelly Stiles. Present via phone were Callie Fishburn of the BCRC and commissioner Mike Foley.

Outstanding minutes

Mr. Foley moved to approve the Sept. 28 minutes. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Mr. Foley moved to approve the October 12 minutes. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Mr. Williams apologized for missing the last meeting

Presentation by Callie Fishburn, housing analysis grant application

Ms. Fishburn reminded the commission that they had signed off on an application by the BCRC to the State for a grant to analyze how revisions to zoning bylaws in nine towns in the region could promote affordable housing. She said her team would like to work on the Shaftsbury analysis in FY 2023, to which all commissioners assented. The BCRC team would work with the PC to, among other things, update standards re accessory dwelling units (about which there is new state legislation), and revise the bylaw to encourage infilling.

Mr. Williams noted that an earlier revision to the bylaw made possible the recent construction of Lake Paran Village, an affordable housing project.

Ms. Fishburn said, depending on the PC's wishes, the BCRC could craft new language or they could do it together. In the end, the BCRC would submit its recommendations, at which point the PC could decide how or whether to act.

November 2022 or March 2023 for next round of bylaw revisions

Ms. Stiles explained that the Town Clerk and Town Administrator strongly urge the PC to plan to put the next round of bylaw revisions on the Town Meeting 2023 ballot. (Placing local initiatives on the November 2022 ballot would cost the Town printing and mailing costs that would otherwise be covered by the State.) The PC agreed to target the March 2023 ballot for additional revisions.

Bylaw clean-up

The PC and ZA discussed several non-substantive changes suggested by the ZA – mostly to clean up contradictory language or fill gaps in the bylaw. A long discussion was held about whether the ZA should be required to issue a certificate of zoning compliance at a cost to the landowner when the ZA can only confirm that setback requirements have been met, and whether the Town should be responsible for enforcing the RBES regulation. Mr. Foley said he thought it wasn't new construction but existing homes that were energy inefficient. All matters will be discussed further at subsequent meetings.

Regulation of paramilitary training facilities

Ms. Miller led a discussion regarding a new bylaw regulating such facilities. Ms. Miller said she thought it best that the issue be broached and discussed by citizens before such a facility were proposed. Mr. Williams noted that the Hale Mtn. Rod and Gun Club is the local voice for gun use, and

that the club has a great deal of credibility. Ms. Cornwell and Ms. Miller both reported that they had been threatened by hate groups, on line and in person. Ms. Cornwell said the county is ripe for such activity. Mr. Williams insisted that the PC could only regulate land use, not thought. Mr. Foley said he'd heard from at least one Hale Mtn. Club member that they don't approve of the kinds of gun use that might be thought of as non-traditional. He said he thought citizens might support a regulation for paramilitary facilities, because "we don't need one; we already have Hale Mtn." Mr. Williams said he doubted things could get as bad in Shaftsbury as they have in Pawlet, but admitted it is a possibility. Ms. Miller will research language targeting land use. The issue was tabled to the next meeting.

Next steps for PC

Mr. Williams would like to begin to study a publication Enabling Better Places, in preparation for working with BCRC on the housing project. Mr. Foley would like to learn more about the state's new Accessory Dwelling Unit law. The PC agreed to meet on December 14 and January 11. The December 28 meeting will be cancelled. Mr. Williams urged Commissioners to attend the Dec. 6 Select Board hearing on the bylaw revisions.

The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 7:35 p.m.