

Shaftsbury Planning Commission

April 26, 2022

Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:04 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Naomi Miller, Mike Foley, and Martha Cornwell. Also present was zoning administrator Shelly Stiles. Citizen Andrea Bacchi joined remotely after the start of the meeting.

Tiny houses

The commission reviewed draft language crafted by Ms. Cornwell. The language, based on bylaws from communities in Maine, moved the emphasis on the structure having wheels to duration of residence in the structure.

Upon discussion, commissioners agreed that it might make sense to consider tiny houses another kind of “manufactured home (or mobile home)” as described in the Shaftsbury bylaws, and that the bylaw could be altered by simply adding the phrase “tiny house” to the phrase “manufactured home (or mobile home.)” But what, they wondered, is meant by “required utilities” in that definition? (See below.) Could a person live in a tiny home with a composting toilet, a dry well, and a well? A spring instead of a well? The ZA will try to find answers to those questions before the next meeting.

Manufactured Home (or Mobile Home): A structure, transportable in one or more sections, which is built on a permanent chassis and is designed for use with or without a permanent foundation when attached to the required utilities. The term “Manufactured Home” does not include a “Recreational Vehicle”. Said structure is designed and approved for use by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and carries a label approving it for said use. Manufacturer’s installation instructions are considered to be a part of the requirements for the placement of a Manufactured Home on a site as a One Family Dwelling.

Affordable housing

Mr. Williams asked what purpose minimum road frontages serve. He suggested more land could be developed if road frontage requirements were relaxed. On discussion, it looked like reducing road frontages in the R zones could encourage forest fragmentation and development of farm land. (Mr. Foley and Ms. Miller pointed out that many Town Plan and State of Vermont priorities are at odds with one another: Housing or a solar array? Or intact forest blocks? Or places to raise food?) What to do about road frontages was left for further discussion.

The PC revisited a proposal from 2012 to enlarge the VR zone. The proposal (which was rejected by the Select Board at that time) would have expanded VR to all of Twitchell Hill, and on either side of Buck Hill eastward to Howard Park. The ZA will confirm that water service is available to all of those areas.

Ms. Bacchi described a program sponsored by HomeShareVT that connects people needing living space with people having extra living space. (Often times they are seniors or others needing a little help in the home.) She said the program is very popular in Burlington, and that she happily took advantage of it when she lived there. Ms. Miller said it is very popular in Brooklyn as well. (The program is not now available in southern Vermont, according the program’s website.)

The PC discussed successful projects like Lake Paran Village and wondered whether it might be duplicable elsewhere in town. Perhaps the Bernstein property could be a candidate? The ZA will try to arrange a field visit.

Mr. Foley noted that public sewer was key for the Lake Paran Village project, and that again and again we stumble upon a lack of a municipal wastewater system for Shaftsbury. Mr. Williams said the Bennington treatment plant has sufficient capacity for Shaftsbury village residents.

Ms. Cornwell noted that the Select Board will be seeking an essentially non-competitive grant to revisit the Stone Environmental wastewater feasibility study, so perhaps a solution is in the offing. Mr. Williams said a community wastewater project would not be approved, as residents outside the Village would refuse to support it.

Other business

The ZA said she thought some PC members' terms had expired. Ms. Miller and Mr. Williams pointed out that the Select Board appoints PC members. Ms. Stiles will check the Select Board minutes to update the list of PC terms.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 7:45 p.m.