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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

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Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission

Date of Meeting: October 9, 2024 in person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

Members Present: Nancy Burns (chair), Emily Cowperthwaite, Zoe Contros Kearn, Mike Albus. Also present was DPW foreman Mike Yannotti and zoning administrator Shelly Stiles.

1. Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. Minutes

Mr. Albus moved to approve the September 11 minutes. Ms. Cowperthwaite seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

3. Discussion, rewrite of subdivision regulations

The zoning administrator explained that the word “subdivision” as used in the regulations conflates two meanings – the subdividing of land into more than one parcel, and the construction of what might commonly be thought of as a suburban-type housing development. She said she hasn’t seen the latter in the ten years she has worked for the Town (Mr. Yannotti wondered whether the last one might not have been the White Farm Lane development, dating to 2005.) She suggested that language in the existing regulations referencing the “housing development” meaning of the word could and should be simplified.

Mr. Yannotti spoke regarding revising the road standards section of the subdivision regulations. He explained that the Town follows State regulations regarding Town roads. (Doing so makes Shaftsbury eligible for state highway funding.) He and the Commission members went through the existing road section of the subdivision regulations. He noted that almost without exception, each item reiterates a requirement contained in State regulations and could be summarized by using the following language instead: “All new roads and associated stormwater infrastructure must be designed in accordance with the latest editions of the Vermont Better Roads Manual, the Vermont Municipal Roads General Permit, and the Vermont Town Road and Bridge Standards.” He recommended keeping two sentences now found on pages 6 and 7 of the Town regulations, to wit: “The DRB may impose other road design standards in order to ensure that slopes and horizontal and vertical curvature, embankments, and soil erosion precautions are adequate to meet the needs of the subdivision and protect the environment. The DRB may seek the advice of a qualified engineer, the Road Foreman or the Board of Selectmen in making a determination under this subsection.”

Mr. Yannotti also recommended that new language similar to “Any new road must be paved at the expense of the applicant” should be added, and that the Planning Commission not recommend to the Select Board that it adopt a policy of not adopting new roads. (The definitions section of the revised regulations will make clear the difference between “road” and “driveway.”)

The Commission agreed to accept Mr. Yannotti’s suggestions and to include as appendices or as hard copies on file the documents referenced in the new language.

The zoning administrator introduced the wastewater section of the existing subdivision regulations, explaining that, similarly, the State, not the Town, regulates such systems. She said she'd been in touch with Chris Ponessi of Mance Engineering Partners about how to revise section 4 of the regulations regarding water and wastewater. Mr. Ponessi suggested the following language: "The applicant must design the subdivision to provide water and wastewater services to each lot. The applicant must demonstrate that the proposed subdivision conforms to the most recent version of the Vermont Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules. A Wastewater permit must be submitted as part of the subdivision application, or prior to the start of the construction." Commission members agreed to this language.

4. Other business

Ms. Burns said she had no further information on the possibility of rezoning 43 Buck Hill Road.

Ms. Contros Kearl moved to adjourn at 6:45 p.m. Ms. Cowperthwaite seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.