

DRAFT
Minutes of Shaftsbury Planning Commission for Sept. 14, 2021

The first 25 minutes of the meeting was spent trying to get Zoom to work properly for all members. In the end Zoning Administrator Shelly Stiles couldn't hear anyone. The meeting came to order for approval of outstanding minutes. The minutes of Aug. 10th were approved 3-0-1 with Naomi abstaining. The minutes of Aug. 24th were approved 3-0-1 with Chris abstaining.

The discussion then turned to local food sources which Martha is in the process of updating for the Town website. She will produce an infographic which will incorporate all this information.

Naomi led a discussion on revising the language of the open space bylaw (cluster subdivision) to make it mandatory instead of optional as determined by the DRB. Chris asked if anyone knew how many times this bylaw had been utilized by a developer. Naomi answered with the correct number – one. Chris pointed out that this was because this wasn't the form that development took in Shaftsbury. Mike said he liked the inclusion of language around forest fragmentation. Chris raised the question of whether provisions were a violation of property rights constituting a taking. Review by the Town attorney was suggested. Chris reiterated his position that this would have little to no effect on development and that we should look for other strategies. A motion by Martha to approve the proposed bylaw after review by the Town attorney with second by Naomi. The motion passed 3-1-0 with Chris voting no.

Mike Foley led a discussion on the permit amendment process whereby the ZA could approve minor changes to an existing permit. This is an effort to streamline our process. He pointed to a process that Montpelier has in place for this. He said that had sent out the language for review but commissioners said they hadn't received it. Because of this, action was differed until the next meeting.

The discussion then turned to the revised language from the Town attorney for boundary line adjustment. Mike thought that the final survey requirement to establish area of the lots involved was burdensome. It was pointed out that this established zoning compliance but he was unconvinced. The proposal was approved 3-1-0 with Mike opposed.

Chris led a discussion of the 2020 census. He reported that statewide established population centers such as St. Johnsbury, Rutland, Brattleboro and Bennington had lost population. Areas that gained were all of Chittenden County along with Montpelier, Stowe and Waterbury. In Bennington County, Arlington was the dividing line with growth in the Northshire and decline in the Southshire especially Bennington and Pownal. Shaftsbury gained 8 people which is as close to no change as possible. Chris expressed the idea that this could be seen as equilibrium not stagnation. Naomi said that equilibrium could be rapidly upset by technological change such as digital technology which provides the opportunity to work from anywhere. Mike said that he thought that the census didn't measure anything and whatever information was gathered was already out of date.

A public hearing on bylaw changes will be held at our next meeting on October 12th.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Williams