

**AMHERST PLANNING BOARD  
&  
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

**JOINT TRAINING SESSION  
Thursday, January 31, 2008 – 6:30 PM  
Town Room, Town Hall**

**SUMMARY**

**PLANNING BOARD  
MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jonathan O’Keeffe, Denise Barberet, Eduardo Suarez,  
Jonathan Shefftz, Aaron Hayden (7:05 PM)

**ZONING BOARD  
MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Tom Simpson, Al Woodhull, Hilda Greenbaum, Barbara Ford,  
Jane Ashby

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Jonathan Tucker, Sue Krzanowski, Bonnie Weeks, Dave  
Waskiewicz, Christine Brestrup, Carolyn Holstein

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Mr. Tucker welcomed everyone and introduced Mr. Larry Shaffer, Town Manager, and Mr. Joel Bard, Town Counsel. Mr. Tucker said that there were several handouts which he suggested should be kept for future reference.

Mr. Larry Shaffer thanked the ZBA for selecting Ms. Ashby as their representative to the Zoning Subcommittee. He congratulated Ms. Ashby on her appointment.

Mr. Shaffer also supported and encouraged the Boards utilization of Town Counsel to assist them when necessary.

Mr. Joel Bard, Town Counsel, began the session by covering Conflict of Interest areas. He noted that anyone serving on a town board or committee is considered an employee. Board members have the right to an opinion, he advised and should call the State Ethics Commission or Town Counsel if, or when, they have questions.

Mr. Bard continued with an overview of the Open Meeting Law and noted that the State Ethics Commission is available to cities and towns and will conduct a workshop on the Open Meeting Law upon request. Mr. Bard summarized the Public Records Law and noted that the jurisdiction falls under the Northwestern District Attorney. He cautioned about email and reminded everyone that the Secretary of State takes the position that all town emails are public records.

Mr. Bard also covered posting requirements for meetings and site visits. There should be no substantive discussion at site visits because they are exempt from the Open Meeting Law. The site visit should be reported at an open meeting, he advised.

Other topics covered were Conducting Public Hearings and Decision Making. Mr. Bard noted that it’s inappropriate for cases to be discussed outside of the hearing. He summarized the public hearing process and quorums. Mr. Bard outlined the process for decisions and reviewed samples of

“good” and “bad” decisions. Consistency is important to good decisions, he said, and they need to be based on factual findings.

General questions and answers were interspersed throughout the session which ended at approximately 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

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Sue Krzanowski, Management Assistant