

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, November 19, 2008 – 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: Jonathan Shefftz, Acting Chair; Bruce Carson, Richard Howland, Denise Barberet, Jonathan O’Keeffe

ABSENT: Susan Pynchon, Eduardo Suarez, Ludmilla Pavlova-Gillham

STAFF: Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director; Sue Krzanowski, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Shefftz opened the meeting at 7:05 PM, and noted that November was misspelled on the agenda.

I. MINUTES – November 5, 2008

Ms. Barberet noted minor corrections to pages 1 and 2.

Mr. Howland MOVED: to approve the Minutes of November 5, 2008 as corrected. Mr. O’Keeffe seconded, and the Motion passed 5-0.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. Draft Master Plan

Mr. Howland suggested that the Board schedule a public hearing before discussing the draft master plan themselves. The Board may then find that it will accept the plan as presented, he suggested, so it should have a public meeting first and then have a subsequent meeting to discuss it.

Mr. Tucker suggested that the Board might want to review the master plan appendices and maps first and then decide what action to take next. Except for a select few, the maps are about existing conditions, he said, and do not indicate any planning intentions for the future. Developing community intentions for what kinds of development should be the next step, he advised. He suggested that the conceptual Land Use Plan was too specific and should be done in a more generalized manner, not property by property. Probably something more like the plan of general areas of conservation interest generated for the Open Space and Recreation Plan, he said.

Ms. Barberet asked about public reaction at the public gathering which was held last year.

Jim Wald, former chair of the CPC, said that it was generally very positive. Aaron Hayden, former secretary of the CPC, briefly summarized the comprehensive planning process.

Mr. Howland said that the Board should get public reaction before tinkering with the draft master plan, and that it was premature for the Board to do it themselves.

The Board discussed what the purpose of the hearing would be, how it would be held, how information would be distributed, and what would be involved.

Mr. Tucker suggested that it might be useful to schedule the public hearing/meeting as Mr. Howland suggested, post the draft master plan on the Town web site and provide a few hard copies in places like the library. He recommended that the Board ask the Comprehensive Planning Committee members to make a presentation at the beginning. There are missing pieces to the plan, he noted. The groundwork was laid but never completed.

Mr. Howland commented that the plan will provide guidance, but it is ephemeral and is not cast in stone.

Mr. Howland MOVED: that the Board agree to schedule a public hearing in the format suggested by the Planning Director, that copies be distributed in additional places and the draft plan be made available online. The public would be encouraged to attend or submit written comments until a date specified. Then the Planning Board will consider the next step. Ms. Barberet seconded.

Mr. O’Keeffe said that he supported that general approach, and suggested that the Board proceed as rapidly as possible. The Board’s regular meetings in December would be the 3rd and 17th. After discussion, it was decided by the members present to cancel the regular meeting on December 3, schedule the public meeting for December 10, and have December 17 as a backup.

Mr. Tucker noted that it would be a public forum, not a formal public hearing.

The vote was 5-0.

For December 10, Mr. O’Keeffe, Ms. Barberet, and Mr. Howland said they would be available. Mr. Shefftz indicated he might be available. Mr. Carson said he would not be available.

For December 17, Mr. O’Keeffe, Mr. Shefftz (probably), Ms. Barberet and Mr. Howland indicated they would be available. Mr. Carson said he would not.

Mr. O’Keeffe said that as many Planning Board members as possible should attend.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Planning Commissioners Journal – in packet

B. Other

“The Regional Reporter” A Newsletter of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission was included in the packet

The Board signed the forms which will be submitted to the Attorney General’s office for the three zoning amendments which were adopted by Town Meeting.

IV. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS - None

V. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS - None

VI. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS - None

VII. PLANNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Zoning** – Mr. O’Keeffe noted that Town Meeting adopted three of the four proposed zoning amendments. The Subcommittee discussed Article 9 (Recreation Facilities), which Town Meeting had referred back to the Planning Board. Mr. Tucker added that he had discussed the outstanding issues with Town Counsel and is working on a draft proposal to address those issues.

In reference to the presentation made for Article 9, Mr. O’Keeffe recommended that guidelines be established for the presentation of the Planning Board’s position on zoning articles to Town Meeting. Such presentations should represent the conclusions of the Board and should not include personal opinions, he said.

Mr. Carson said that the Subcommittee also discussed the phased growth bylaw and alternatives to replace it, using the existing point system. Mr. Tucker added that the point system could be used to increase or decrease density, or even to shift the permit type. Staff were checking to see if the latter option would be legal, he said.

Mr. Carson said that the Subcommittee also discussed the High Street/Dickinson Street district, the municipal parking center and village centers.

Mr. Tucker said that the Subcommittee also discussed holding a zoning forum to discuss Spring Town Meeting zoning amendments, like the one held in June to discuss Fall Town Meeting zoning amendments. This might be scheduled for December 3rd, he said.

VIII. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission** – Mr. Howland said that the recent meeting was about master plans. He also suggested that Ms. Pynchon might be appointed as the Board’s representative or alternative now that she has been elected chair.
- B. Community Preservation Act Committee** – Ms. Barberet said there is a meeting tomorrow.
- C. Agricultural Commission** – No Report

IX. REPORT OF THE CHAIR – No Report

X. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – No Report

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Howland MOVED: to adjourn this meeting at 8:00 PM. Mr. Shefftz seconded, and the Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted:

Sue Krzanowski, Administrative Assistant

Approved:

Jonathan Shefftz, Acting Chair

DATE: _____