

Town of Sunderland Planning Commission Board Meeting

Wednesday March 27, 2024 6:00 PM

Meeting Agenda

Members in Attendance:

Ben Travis
Michael Pugliese
Gordon Dossett
Robert Zeif (*Chair*)
David Kiernan

Others in Attendance:

Mia Smith- Secretary
Dixie Zens- Selectboard chair
Alex Bresnick

1. Call to Order by Rob Zeif at 6:08 pm.
2. Introduction of Board Members and speakers: Dave Kiernan, Gordon Dossett, Rob Zeif, Ben Travis, Michael Pugliese.
3. Additions / Deletions to the agenda-none.
4. Election of Planning Commission Board chair
 - Rob Zeif offers to others to volunteer or nominate a member of the board.
 - Gordon Dossett moves to nominate Rob Zeif.

Mover: Gordon Dossett
2nd: Michael Pugliese
Result: Passed

5. PC Board assignments for 2024
 - David Kiernan heading up STR and re-doing bylaws (making “user friendly”), Rob Zeif recommends having a working session to organize bylaws.
 - David Kiernan and Michael Pugliese will work on creating another zoning district in the new “village designation.”
6. PC board opening
 - Rob Zeif asks the board if they would like to add a sixth member, or remain at five.
 - Dave Kiernan says remaining at five or going to seven is ideal, maintaining an odd number.

- Gordon Dossett says his preference is a larger board, especially as the town works on developing the village center, saying that it will bring in diversity to represent the town.
- Dave Kiernan and Michael Puglese say that the village designation will be developed in a working group with the select board, and an odd number helps with voting and dilutes the chair's power to veto/tie break.
- Rob Zeif says the benefit of a larger board would bring diversity to the board, odd number benefits functionality.
- Board agrees to remain at five until someone shows interest in joining, and then they will move toward seven members.

7. Approval of Minutes – February 28, 2024 and Special Meeting March 20, 2024

- Minutes for 2/28/24

Mover: Gordon Dossett

2nd: Ben Travis

Result: Passed

- Minutes for 3/20/24
- Factual edit made to STR detail

Mover: Dave Kiernan

2nd: Ben Travis

Result: Passed

8. Zoning Administrator Update

- Dave Kiernan shares plans of work on rt 7A, south of Hill Farm on west side of road, currently building access road.
- Have been renewing plans since 2008 through Act 250, expires in November. If “substantial completion” is not done by then, they will need to reapply through Act 250.
- 17 lots, 3 lots not buildable, well and wastewater permits issued to all.
- Specific drainage requirements through Act 250, because of slope.
- ZA will report to the planning board as work continues.
- ZA is expecting an application for a firearms range. Allowed in Bylaws, but the applicant needs a hearing in front of the Planning Commission.
- Board passes around a copy of original 2003 BCRC plans for town village designation.

9. Town Village update

- Andrew McKeever, Janet Hurley, and Rob Zeif had meeting about boundaries of town village plan.

- One of the committee members (from Bennington) proposed an amendment to designation to increase boundaries north to old Basketville Building (as originally proposed by town). Rob Zeif responds in the meeting that the shrinkage was due to precedent but the town of Sunderland isn't a "cookie cutter" Vermont shaped town, why can't they expand the designation to the northern border?
- The Committee Member then withdrew his proposal after the committee remained opposed based on precedent.
- Rob Zeif says the plan is to eventually attempt to expand the boundaries and to develop a zoning district to maintain control of character.
- Janet Hurley followed up saying that zoning changes can be made in the future, along with an extension to incorporate parts of the adjacent zone.
- Gordon Dossett clarifies about creating an adjacent zone that impacts the (that was part of the original proposal) so that it mirrors the designated area.
- Dave Kiernan says an issue could be the tax benefits and funding available in the designated area that then wouldn't be available in the area zoned to mirror.
- Gordon Dossett makes a suggestion to have a warned meeting to walk the area to glean perspectives and brainstorm ideas.
- Dave Kiernan says that development isn't organized well within the town, a more modern organization is to have a Planning Commission (legislative branch), Development Review Board (judicial branch), and onto Environmental court.

10. Town Signs Update

- Dixie Zens says that Michael Pugliese's sign was the favorite, could the cover bridge be made larger?
- Next steps are for the ARPA committee to make a recommendation to the Selectboard following the April 7th meeting.
- The board recommends five signs, two each on 7A and Sunderland Hill Rd, and one of Kansas Rd on the border of East Arlington.

11. STR next steps

- Dave Kiernan makes a motion to accept STR bylaw.

Mover: Ben Travis

2nd: Gordon Dossett

Result: Discussion, then Passed

- Discussion following the special STR meeting about the issue of sex trafficking and transient workers being housed in rentals.
- David Kiernan discusses the potential of capping number of bedrooms allowed in rentals (to four bedrooms).

- Rob Zeif recommends planning board vote on STR as it exists, and send it to selectboard with recommendations to consider sex trafficking and transient labor issues. The selectboard can then amend the bylaw to include recommendations and pass STR if possible.
- Rob Zeif restates the motion to accept STR and send it onto the selectboard, it is passed.

12. Old Business

- In the 1/17/24 meeting, Lyman Orton was mentioned in wanting to be involved in supporting work on the church. Will plan a meeting with selectboard and church trustees.
- Rob Zeif proposed to Dixie Zens having both boards get together to keep up to date on what each other is doing.

13. Public Comment – Visitors / Concerned Citizens- none.

14. Next Meeting April 24, 2024

15. Adjourn at 7:35 pm.

Mover: Dave Kiernan

2nd: Ben Travis

Result: Passed