

**Minutes of  
The Williamstown Planning Board  
TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2015  
7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building**

**Members Present:** Elizabeth McGowan, Amy Jeschawitz, Ann McCallum.

**Others Present:** Andrew Groff, Louisa Volpi, Stephen Dravis

Ms. McGowan opened the meeting at 7:03 PM.

**ANR**

**63 North Street : Guntlow**

Ms. Louisa Volpi of Guntlow and Associates explained that this plan was previously endorsed by the Board the only change is addition of language required by the Land Court.

Ms. McGowan called for a motion.

Ms. McCallum moved to approve the ANR plan for 63 North Street.

Ms. Jeschawitz seconded.

The Motion carried 3-0.

**New Business**

*Hotel Project Update*

Ms. McGowan noted that the Board does not have a quorum to begin this deliberation without invoking the Rule of Necessity, as described by the State Ethics Commission, for the public record.

Ms. Jeschawitz stated that she has an appearance of a conflict of interest as she works in the hospitality industry.

Ms. McGowan stated that she has a conflict as she is employed as a Professor by Williams College.

Ms. McCallum stated she does not have a conflict.

Ms. McCallum stated that Mr. Kolesar has called a meeting of individuals, various stakeholders in Town, to create a committee to discuss the hotel project and its location on the south end of the street.

Ms. Jeschawitz expressed concern with the College not doing this planning process publicly.

Ms. McGowan agreed and expressed similar concern.

Ms. McCallum added that the committee is made up of herself, Hank Art, Linda Conway, Rita Coppola, Hugh Daley, Ed Photo, Joe Finnegan, Jo Harrison, Jim Kolesar, and John Story. The discussions of the group will determine where the hotel should be located, roughly on the Agway site or on the Legion site. The group's first meeting will be held April 20.

Ms. McCallum will also contact Nancy Fitzpatrick to hear about her experiences with running the Red Lion Inn which is built in a

*Planning Projects for 2016*

Ms. McGowan stated that one of the projects she hopes to take on is a long look at housing in Williamstown. Looking at housing types what is demanded and what we could provide through a zoning change could create a new market for housing in Williamstown.

Ms. McCallum noted that currently you can divide a building into two not more than two units.

Ms. McGowan added that a zoning change of this type could increase the supply of housing that people can afford.

Ms. McCallum added that it should be possible to permit new construction of the same type not just housing conversions.

Mr. Groff noted that he has provided a memo to the Board detailing some areas that could use various levels of planning work by the Board. The memo provided is by no means a comprehensive list it is simply meant to guide discussion. Many of these ideas have come up before the Board in the past. Some have been raised by the Board, Staff, and the Zoning Board as well.

Ms. McCallum asked how the Board would go about a major revision of housing regulation.

Mr. Groff stated that this is where the board should discuss the provided flow chart from Ms. Jeschawitz.

Ms. Jeschawitz stated that she attended the CPTC (UMass Extension) Conference in Worcester. At this conference the topic planning with community support was a particularly important course. Everyone no matter where they are should follow a process to planning. This process is the flow chart that was put together and provided to the Board. Public participation is also an integral part of this process because if the community is engaged with an

issue they can be there to support it when the time comes for Town Meeting to make decisions.

Ms. McGowan added that this is a great way to approach problems. The Board should not focus so closely on the May Town Meeting deadline. The Board must give itself enough time to properly reach out to members of the community to really address these issues.

Ms. Jeschawitz agreed that it will be critically important in the future to attend other community functions and to get out of the building.

Mr. Groff mentioned that this is a good opportunity to point out to the Board that the Economic Development Committee is holding two sessions on economic development at the Williams Inn on Wednesday, April 29. One forum is 7:45 – 9:00am and the other is 5:30 – 7:00pm. The Board is encouraged to send some representatives to these sessions.

Ms. McGowan agreed that members of the Board should attend these sessions.

Ms. Jeschawitz added that she and Mr. Groff also met recently with Regional Planning (BRPC) to discuss available grant opportunities.

Mr. Groff noted that Williamstown is unique with staff members in the Community Development Department we can stretch these types of grant monies farther than other communities. District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) monies or Planning Assistance Toward Housing (PATH) dollars are potential sources of funding to perhaps bring in some outside help to run planning charrettes or sit down and get into technical details of the Subdivision Rules and Regulations.

Ms. Jeschawitz brought up the concept of having a retreat meeting over breakfast at a different location, the Inn perhaps. The Selectboard does this as a way of setting policy priorities for the year. This Board could do it too. The Board agreed that this could be worthwhile.

McCallum does it make sense between now and next meeting to do research and be a little more informed.

Mr. Groff noted that there are several sources of information for the Board to look at if they want to begin research. John Ryan's report and the Sustainable Berkshires Housing Element are key pieces of information.

Ms. McCallum agreed that these would be good resources and reiterated the previously noted

Ms. McGowan asked for an explanation on some of the site specific planning issues.

Mr. Groff stated that these have all been discussed sometimes briefly in other meetings.

Ms. Jeschawitz added that Waubeeka and Five Corners is a good example. They have both been discussed but not together. They are right next to each other, development at Waubeeka, if done right, could be good for Five Corners.

Mr. Groff added that the zoning does limit activity at both the store and at the old Green River Farm. An appropriate community developed zoning change proposal might help these properties. The same goes for Waubeeka. The low purchase price for the course does indicate a shrinking economic vitality of the golf course. Alternative uses need to be discussed because the market alternative, 8 ANR Lots, or successional forest do not seem to be in the best interest of the community.

Mr. Groff added that the Lehovoc lot is included because it is a prime piece of land in the center of town that is presently bifurcated between two zoning districts. It will be difficult to do anything with the site as it is presently zoned

Mr. Groff added he hopes this could turn into a rolling list, the Board could continually update this and evaluate plans and implementation processes with the list.

Ms. Jeschawitz noted that Colonial Plaza is listed as a discussion point because it was called out specifically in the last mater plan. It also very clearly needs some work. It however has a lot of potential.

#### *May Meeting Date*

Ms. McCallum moved to set the date for May's meeting as Monday May 11.

Ms. Jeschawitz seconded.

The motion carried 3-0.

#### **MINUTES**

Ms. McCallum moved to approve March's minutes as amended. .

Ms. Jeschawitz seconded.

The motion carried 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.