

Webster Planning Board

Minutes - Meeting of December 17, 2009

Present: Chairman Cliff Broker; members Jere Buckley (secretary) and Richard Doucette; and alternates Richard Cummings, Sue Rauth, and Susan Roman. After momentary uncertainty about proper procedures, Chairman Broker seated selectman Tom Mullins as selectman member, given that selectman member George Hashem and alternate selectman member David Klumb were both out of Town. Also present: Planning and Zoning Secretary Mary Smith and a number of residents and their representatives.

Chairman Broker convened the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Attendance was taken, with the results noted above. Mr. Cummings served in voting capacity in the absence of newly appointed member John Nelson.

The Board reviewed the minutes of their 19 November meeting. Upon motion made by Mr. Doucette and seconded by Mr. Cummings, the Board voted unanimously to endorse those minutes as written.

The Board was presented with an application from Beverly Russell for a 3-lot subdivision of Lot 7-1 on Battle Street. Mr. Buckley noted that the meeting agenda called for a public hearing on this subdivision, something normally not scheduled until after an application is reviewed and approved. Based on that input, Chairman Broker agreed to delay the opening of the public hearing until the application had been considered, and granted the floor to surveyor Tom Bernier for a description of the proposal.

The proposed subdivision consists of separating two lots, one of about 5 acres and the other of about 6 acres, each with just over 250 feet of frontage on Battle Street, from the ~110-acre Lot 7-1. The submitted plat shows a proposed common driveway cut at the top of the hill close to the northerly boundary of the new lots, quickly branching into one driveway serving the more northerly of the two new lots and a second driveway with an easement across that lot and serving the other lot. This configuration was described as resulting from consultation with the DOT on the number of allowable entrances to a State highway and on safety and sightline issues. The Board noted that Town approval will be required if and when actual driveway construction is undertaken. Finding the application to be complete and the proposed subdivision to be straightforward, upon motion made by Mr. Doucette and seconded by Mr. Cummings, the Board approved the application and agreed to proceed with an expedited public hearing. The vote was unanimous except for an abstention by Mr. Buckley, who was concerned that the Board was setting an ill-advised precedent by shortcutting its own procedures and not allowing the time for careful consideration of the application.

Chairman Broker then opened the scheduled public hearing on the proposed subdivision. Several abutters were present, one via a letter read by Ms. Smith. None had any objections to the proposed subdivision. Upon motion made by Mr. Doucette and seconded by Mr. Cummings, the Board voted unanimously to approve the 3-lot subdivision, subject to setting the bounds, walking the bounds, and submittal of final Mylars.

ZBA chairman Marty Bender appeared before the Board to discuss the NH Outdoor Lighting Efficiency Act of 2009 and related topics. He noted that efficient lighting can save money as well as being good for the planet. He agreed to supply the Board with example ordinances for consideration in the coming year. He also suggested that immediate improvements could be made in the areas of Town Hall and the Public Safety Building. Possibilities include fewer and/or better-shielded light fixtures, motion detectors, and timers. He agreed to supply specific recommendations with cost and benefit information for consideration by the selectmen as they prepare their 2010 budget recommendations. Mr. Mullins indicated that the selectmen would be receptive to such a submission.

The Board again returned to the subject of Affordable Housing legislation. It was agreed that no relevant *Zoning Ordinance* changes will be undertaken this year, in part because the information to quantify the problem is still unavailable. Ms. Roman indicated that she expects to be working with local government sources after the holidays to determine the extent to which Webster does or does not currently meet their "fair share" obligation. It was agreed that there are potentially related aspects of Town ordinances that warrant attention in the coming year. Particular mention was made of the impractical and unenforceable "blood relative" requirement and the inexplicable 800 square foot limitation on accessory apartments. Mr. Mullins expressed great concern about the possibility of multi-family housing with shared sewer and water facilities, and the potentially catastrophic financial burden on the Town if such systems were to fail to the point of condemnation.

Mr. Buckley asked Ms. Roman and Ms. Rauth to comment on the ramifications, if any, of the selectmen's decision not to sign the non-binding letter of intent requested by the Scenic Byway Committee. They

advised that Webster was the only town not to sign that letter, and that how the Committee is now going to proceed is uncertain. They once again acknowledged that Webster's interest in the Byway is very different from that of towns with more extensive commerce and more to benefit from increased tourism. Webster's primary interest is the potential for 80% federal funding for easements to protect scenic property along the Byway. Ms. Roman did not think that Webster's failure to sign the letter of intent in any way closes the door to access to such funds. She intends to continue to attend Committee meetings so that Webster will be aware of and will hopefully have some say in what happens.

Upon motion made by Mr. Cummings, seconded by Mr. Doucette, and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

The next Board meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on 21 January 2010.

Respectfully submitted,

Jere D. Buckley, Secretary