

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Benjamin Eddy Bldg., 6 South Killingly Road
Wednesday, July 6, 2022

A. Call to Order

Warren Ducharme called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

B. Roll Call

Planning Board Members: Mike Carpenter; Warren Ducharme; Susan Joyce; George Sackal; Secretary, Hilary Downes-Fortune.

Excused: David Paolissi; Anthony Renzi

Staff present: Michael Antonellis, Planner

Public present: Lynne Rider

C. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion to approve the June 1, 2022 minutes. Mr. Carpenter made a motion; Ms. Joyce seconded. Discussion: On bottom of page 6, change January to June. With this correction, motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion to approve the September 15, 2021 minutes. Ms. Downes-Fortune made a motion; Mr. Carpenter seconded. Discussion: motions need to be inserted in parts D and E; Mr. Antonellis will do this. With this addition, motion passed 3-0-2 (Mr. Sackal and Ms. Joyce abstained as they were not at that meeting).

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion to swap items D and E in the agenda. Mr. Sackal made the motion; Ms. Joyce seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

D. Recommendation to Town Council for the creation of a Finance Committee

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion. Mr. Carpenter made a motion to investigate the construction of a finance committee to assist with the creation of the town's budget. For town council to consider and opine as to the formation of a finance committee as it relates to the town charter. Ms. Joyce seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

E. Comprehensive Plan—Public Hearing

Public hearing to discuss approval of the draft Comprehensive Plan (continued from 6/1/22)

Mr. Antonellis stated that he incorporated comments from the previous meeting and re-posted the Draft Comprehensive Plan (the “Draft Plan”) on the town website.

Mr. Carpenter referred to the Foster Land Trust (FLT) handout that he provided to the board in response Mr. Sackal’s comment regarding a town acquisition plan for open space. He stated that the FLT is not currently planning to acquire more properties because they don’t have the staff to take care of the properties they already own. He mentioned the \$81,000 grant they received from RI DEM to construct/improve parking lots at three FLT properties. Mr. Carpenter also said they have a plan to develop equestrian trails on the Grass Property on Shippee Schoolhouse Road. Mr. Carpenter also responded to Mr. Sackal’s written comments on the Natural Resources section of the Draft Plan noting that there is additional grant money available from RI DEM for the North-South Trail which passes through Foster.

Mr. Carpenter also commented on Mr. Sackal’s comment about the Water Resources section of the Draft Plan. He said that we need better zoning because there are some areas in town that are pre-zoning and still have cesspools. Mr. Antonellis stated that he wrote to the Providence Water Supply Board to inquire whether they could provide low-interest loans to homeowners in the Scituate Watershed for septic system improvements (as they have to homeowners elsewhere to replace lead drinking water supply lines) but they have not responded. Mr. Carpenter also noted that the new state wetlands regulations reduce the amount of developable land in Foster and requires that runoff be addressed in development plans. Mr. Antonellis noted that Action Items in the Draft Plan’s Water Resources section address this and other protections.

Mr. Carpenter stated that some of the historic villages in town have pre-zoning residences that prevent them from meeting water quality regulations. Mr. Antonellis noted that at least one of these locales, the Abbey Road subdivision, have a shared Community Supply Well. Mr. Carpenter also stated that we have a liability due to all of the unmaintained roads in town. Discussion ensued about the status of some of these roads and how that pertains to development.

Mr. Sackal asked if the town can reduce the potential for solar farm installations via ordinance. He said he spoke to someone at the state offices who said that the typical solar power generation is 1 MW per 4-5 acres, and under Foster’s allowance of up to 20 MW that amounts to 80-100 acres. Mr. Antonellis stated that the maximum allowable size in town is 40 acres, and reducing the potential uses of a property is considered a “taking.” Mr. Sackal then said he would like the work “major” removed from the Draft Plan in regard to solar as it conflicts with the state definition of major, which is 40 MW.

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Mr. Sackal also asked what we can do about the vote the Planning Board made at the April 7, 2021 meeting to recommend that wind turbines be banned in town. Mr. Antonellis stated that because the meeting was mistakenly posted as Canceled on the Secretary of State's website, he was unable to upload the minutes from that meeting, and therefore our vote is not valid. He said one solution to this is to remove the term "wind turbines" from the Draft Plan, put wind turbines on the next meeting agenda, and vote again to ban them.

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion. Ms. Downes-Fortune made a motion to continue the public hearing at the July 20, 2022, meeting. Mr. Sackal seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

F. Notice of Zoning Board of Review Decision—37 Mill Road

Mr. Antonellis stated that the appeal to Zoning Board of Review regarding the junkyard property at 37 Mill Road was denied.

G. Adjournment

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Downes-Fortune made a motion to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Hilary Downes-Fortune, Secretary