

**TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**
January 18, 2022
6:00 P.M.
Municipal Building, Council Room

PRESENT:

Steve Conley, Chairman
Steve St. Pierre, Vice Chairman
Stephen Gould, Secretary
Jeff McCabe (arrived at 6:14 pm)
Matt Smith
Derek Chretien
Dan Luce, Alternate
Joel Greenwood, Planner
Cynthia Kirk, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Harvey Austin

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Bryan Belliveau, Code Enforcement Officer
Cara Mason

• **QUORUM:**

Planning Board Meeting called to order at 6:00 P.M. Quorum was present.

2) MINUTES OF THE January 4, 2022 PLANNING BOARD MEETING TO BE APPROVED:

Motion by Steve St. Pierre to approve the January 4, 2022 Planning Board meeting minutes, as written. Seconded by Dan Luce. Motion passed 3-0-2. (Stephen Gould and Matt Smith abstained)

3) SITE PLAN / SUBDIVISION:

None

4) ITEMS BY THE PUBLIC:

None

5) COMMUNICATIONS:

None

6) NEW BUSINESS:

None

7) UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A) Discussion of the proposed changes to the Animal & Fowl Ordinance

Cynthia explained that the draft had gone to the Selectmen for review and they had a few things that they would like to change so it is now coming back to the Planning Board. Cara explained that the Selectmen changed the order of the document as well as a couple spelling

corrections. She said that there are a couple more changes that she has noticed. Where it discusses at large it says “dogs” it should actually say “animals”. Also, that definition of “at large” should state that it does not include cats because they are allowed to be at large off of the owner’s property per state law. Cara said that where it says owner, it should say control of “animals” instead of just saying “dog”. She said those are the only other changes she found. Joel Greenwood said he would like to the purpose in the ordinance tightened up a little. It is very vague and general as it is written. Everyone agreed. Cynthia found that in the current ordinance there was no purpose at all. Cara said this added purpose came from Steve Govoni. Joel said it just doesn’t seem very clear and should probably say a little bit more. Joel said he can do some research and come up with something if everyone is ok with that. After further discussion about the rest of the changes, everyone agreed that they were fine with them.

Motion by Steve St. Pierre to send the Animal and Fowl Ordinance back to the Selectmen for review with the revision to the purpose to be made by Joel Greenwood. Seconded by Derek Chretien. Motion passed 6-0.

B) Discussion of the proposed changes to the Street Naming and House Numbering Ordinance.

Bryan explained that to provide better service to the taxpayers they are looking to add the Deputy Fire Chief into the ordinance as someone else that can assign official addresses. That way if the Fire Chief isn’t there then there is a backup person. Steve St. Pierre said that the town is also in need of enforcing the requirement of buildings having the numbers displayed clearly. He was looking for a place on North Avenue the other day and hardly any of the buildings have numbers on them.

Steve Conley said he noticed in the ordinance that the Selectmen have the power to name streets. He said usually it seems like the developer picks the name. Bryan said that is usually how it is done.

Motion by Derek Chretien to send the Street Naming and House Numbering Ordinance to the Selectmen for review. Seconded by Stephen Gould. Motion passed 6-0.

C) Discussion of the proposed changes to the Property Maintenance Ordinance.

Steve Conley said that Bryan has provided them with a copy of the Town of Fairfield Property Maintenance Ordinance to look at. Bryan explained that Fairfield’s Ordinance is pretty much exactly what he was looking to come up with for Skowhegan. The format and updated statutes are what he was trying to do with our ordinance and he thinks this one would be a lot easier to update to meet Skowhegan’s needs instead of the one they were looking at before. Steve Conley asked what the town has now that Bryan has been using. Joel explained that Skowhegan does have a current Property Maintenance Ordinance that they had come up with when Randy Gray was here but, in some ways, it is very vague.

Bryan went over the things that would need to be changed in this ordinance to make it work for Skowhegan. Jeff McCabe said he doesn’t see anything about rodents in this one. Bryan said that is something that would need to be added in. Steve St. Pierre said there is something about rodents at the end of section 5.

Steve Conley said he thinks that the fine of up to \$2500.00 per day seems a little steep. Bryan said that is actually state statute. He said he isn’t going after people to collect those big fines. He would rather have voluntary compliance by the property owner instead of charging them fines.

Steve Conley said what he is concerned about with this ordinance is that it gives more power to government to be able to go after people who may not have the means to make these

necessary repairs and then we start fining them. He said in the future they could end up with a very overzealous Code Enforcement Officer to uses this ordinance to really put the hammer down on our taxpayers. Steve St. Pierre said that having something in place like this ordinance would give a more precise direction for people to be able to follow. Stephen Gould said that you also have to look at the other side of things as well. He said a lot of the houses in town are fairly close together. He said say you have someone with a pretty decent house and the next-door neighbor has a house where half their asbestos siding is falling off and is blowing all over the place. He said that they also have to consider being able to protect the people with the decent houses from hazards from the neighbors. Joel said this type of ordinance is to protect all of the taxpayer's health, wellness, safety and financial investments in their properties.

Bryan said another thing he would like to see in this ordinance is a rule that says that banks and finance companies need to somehow register their vacant properties with the town so that he can make sure that those properties are secure and kept in good condition. He said that state statutes require that banks report vacant properties to municipalities and also provide a contact if there are any issues. They are not doing that here in Skowhegan.

Joel asked what they would like him to do. Bryan said it would probably be easier to repeal our current ordinance and replace with a new one using the Fairfield one as a guide. Jeff McCabe asked about the blight definition. Bryan said he can talk with Jeff Hewett about a more precise definition since he has worked with the State on the Slum & Blight program. Joel said he should have a draft to review for the next meeting.

D) Discussion of the proposed changes to the Sign Ordinance.

Bryan said he has found a good definition for public way and if they were to add this into the current Sign Ordinance then it might take care of the issue with the signs on the Skowhegan Fairgrounds fence. He found this definition in our brush and leaf pickup rules. He said by adding this it would make this ordinance only apply to town-maintained roads and Constitution Drive is not a town-maintained road. By doing this is would essentially put the ball in the State's court for them to update their off-premise advertising laws which isn't going to be a quick process.

Joel said that it would be an easy revision to put that definition in there and he should be able to have that for the next meeting as well.

Stephen Gould asked about the section that states all signs need to be at least 5' from the property lines. He is wondering who determines where the property line is. Bryan said it is up to the landowner to verify where their property lines are so he would tell them to probably get a survey if they aren't sure.

8) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE:

Joel said he hasn't had a chance to work much on the next section. He is hoping to be able to do that in the near future.

9) ITEMS BY:

- **SELECTMEN:**

- **DEPARTMENT HEADS:**

Bryan said that the Mary Street project is moving along. There are also a couple minor site plan reviews that will be happening. Bromar Printing is looking to repurpose the building beside them and the Middle School addition is moving forward. He also said that Bigelow Brewery's permits have now expired and they will need to reapply for their site plan permits.

- **MEMBERS:**

Stephen Gould said that there was a meeting of the Public Safety Building Committee and it was voted to pass the project on to the Selectmen. The Selectmen then approved to move forward with the project. He said it has been a bumpy process but now it is finally going forward. Stephen also said that Garrett Quinn is bringing up the issue of forever chemicals to the Selectmen now. He said Garrett lives on the Notch Rd. near the town's sludge disposal location. He said there is literature here in the building and this issue will not be going away any time soon. Bryan said that the state does have a spreadsheet online showing every sludge site within the state and every time that dumping has occurred.

- **CHAIRMAN:**

Steve Conley said it is nice to be back.

- **STAFF:**

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Stephen Gould to adjourn at 7:15 p.m., Seconded by Steve St. Pierre.

Motion passed 6-0.

Minutes approved on February 1, 2022.

Chairman
