

Planning Board Minutes

Wednesday, May 11, 7:30-8:40 pm

Planning Board members in attendance: Richard Nathhorst, Tom Ewing, Swan Keyes, Van Stoddard, Ken Kahn, Steve Freedman, Tim Shores

Also in attendance: Emily Innes, planning consultant

Minutes taken by Tim Shores

1. Review and Accept minutes of last meeting.

Planning Board minutes for meeting April 13, 2022: approved unanimously (Swan abstaining)

2. Annual Re-organization of officers.

- Steve nominated Ken for Chair.
- Ken nominated Steve for Vice Chair.
- Ken nominated Tim as Secretary. Tim welcomed a second appointment as Secretary -- with Swan's approval, given that the usual tradition has been that the newly elected member take on this role. Tradition is valuable to community well-being, however, since Tim's minutes are "superlative" -- to quote Ken's appraisal -- and, furthermore, since Tim derives great joy in their minutes-taking and in their reputation-mongering as a minutes-taker, it would be tragic to deprive the Town of Leverett of the valuable service. The other members of the Planning Board grunted approvingly.
- All of these nominations were motioned, seconded, and approved unanimously.

3. Report of the Planning Board By Planning Board Members Attending the Working Group Meeting for Phase One of the Master Plan.

- Tim and Richard described the positive experience reporting on progress to the Select Board last night (May 11). Tim suggested we schedule a quarterly report to the Select Board meeting, since Tom Hankinson suggested some kind of regular update. Tim can take on the task of reminding Margie to add this to the Select Board agenda.
- Tim explained his suggestion of holding a Comprehensive Plan Q&A at each Planning Board meeting.
 - Emily agreed that it's good to maintain engagement and to find ways to keep people appointed to the work after the end of the Working Group at the end of June. She suggested that we consider forming the Steering Group early, even before hearing about the new grant. They can read up on documents over the summer and fall before the new project officially begins.
 - Tom expressed concern about having Planning Board meeting Q&A sessions that aren't facilitated or structured, especially on topics that

people feel strongly about. It's also not clear how the questions and concerns shared at these meetings could be conveyed to the Steering Committee. Emily suggested that some structure could be designed for these sessions.

- Steve explained that the purpose of these sessions would not be to get deep into discussion, but to keep the matter of the Comprehensive Plan in front of people's attention, so that they feel engaged.
- Tim echoed Steve, and also suggested it's an opportunity for residents to feel heard by the Planning Board.
- Richard suggested that we not restrict ourselves to Leverett Connects for engagement and outreach, since it doesn't reach everyone in town, and it isn't operated by the town itself. He suggests that we create our own forum for discussion that the Planning Board manages. Also good to promote our work in local papers.
- Steve asked Emily: what is the risk of Steering Committee members bringing their personal agenda to the work? Emily replies that this does happen, but the committee structure helps to bring a diversity of voices to the process. We're also not obligated to accept every application. We could frame our request for applicants to deliberately seek people willing to work on behalf of the town as a whole. Emily said it is fine to have one or two people on a steering committee with a vested interest in a single topic as long as there are many others who are interested in the broader picture of the whole town.
- The next Working Group meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 19 5:30pm to 7pm. It will be a hybrid meeting hosted at Town Hall, and Richard will manage the Zoom meeting.
- Emily's plan is to get the Working Group draft report to us in early June for Planning Board comment.

4. Discuss Community One Stop for Growth application. The application is open as of May 2, and is due June 3. Review the application page, and review the more detailed Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA).

- Tom asked Emily for her estimate of the likelihood of winning this grant. Since it's only the second year of the Community One Stop, it's hard for Emily to estimate the likelihood. That said, the state has set aside a lot of funding for municipal planning.
- Our process: Tom will get the grant application started, Tim will provide writing support, Swan will provide editing support as someone who used to teach grant writing. Tom will reach out to Emily to solicit her feedback.
- Max grant amount this year is \$75,000. Emily agrees that it makes sense to request this amount, especially since the next activities will require more staffing by the chosen planning consultant. The additional staffing would be to include specialists in different elements of the Comprehensive Planning process.

- Steve will reach out to Senator Comerford to get her advice and feedback on this grant opportunity and the municipal planning process from the point of view of Beacon Hill.

5. Call In Business.

- Ken reported on two phone calls with residents, of interest because they are issues that repeat themselves.
 - Someone called about a proposed house lot to determine whether it was in an aquifer protection district. Ken referred to the Town of Leverett Official Zoning Map dated 2008 with the Aquifer Protection Overlay District shown thereon to advise that the lot is in the Aquifer Protection Overlay District.
 - Someone called about whether it was permitted to add a tiny house in a person's back yard. The expectation is that we will be addressing that topic more and more in the future.

Next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for June 8 7:30pm, by Zoom.

With the procedural lopsidedness for which this Board is famous, the meeting was adjourned, with several motions, even more seconds, a third, and utter unanimity.