

Planning Board
Minutes of December 3, 2018
History Room, Library 7 pm

Attending: Members Jenks, Laurie, Wilson, Eiseman (recording)

Others: Kristin DeBoer

Approved minutes of November 13. Minutes of 11-28-18 not yet finished as additional notes from Wilson are missing. The handout of the powerpoint delivered at the forum on streets will be appended.

Review of public forum on streets and next steps. Select Board member Agoglia is looking for information on the apparently \$100,000 earmarked by Representative Goldstein-Rose for Pelham: \$50,000 “to be expended for sidewalk projects for the village center in the town of Pelham; provided further, that not less than \$50,000 shall be expended for a commercial kitchen in the community hall in town of Pelham.” Jenks has asked PVPC ’s Becky Basch for suggestions on how this money might best be used for Village Center street projects other than hiring an engineer which the Board feels is premature. The board agreed that many street details must be worked out with Highway Department and Police as well as landowners and neighbors in the area.

Updates and discussion. PVPC Local Technical Assistance grant applications are due January 11. The Board decided that a manual of procedures and forms to guide this and future planning boards in dealing with Village Center applications would be a sound project. The Board also discussed the need for an updated traffic study so we know what steps are needed to make the Village Center safer. Abbie will look into this.

The Board will meet on December 10 to hear constituent concerns about the new zoning for Village Center and then on December 17 to finalize details on the Storm Water Management Bylaw. Next meetings in January will be posted for the 7th to ensure that the application is sufficient and complete and the regular meeting on the 14th will be posted but cancelled if not necessary.

Wilson questioned whether the Conservation Commission may be given excess control over stormwater management. Eiseman pointed out that the Commission manages stormwater issues in Belchertown and that since they are already up to speed on procedures and forms and have staff to manage the issues, the Pelham Commission is the best suited at this point to be in charge.

Jenks noted that a Capital Planning meeting Dec 11 will be held by the Select Board and Finance Committee to determine budgetary needs in the next year. Wilson will attend for the Board. Eiseman plans to attend the Massachusetts Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) Listening

Session on the same date. Jenks has another commitment and cannot attend the RPAC meeting nor the Capital Planning meeting.

Wilson reported that he has learned that the trailers don't have long term leases as we had thought. The owner may be interested in doing some other project. Wilson will stay in touch with the owner and encourage him to come to the Board early to discuss what sort of project might be a good fit for that site in the core of the Village Center Mixed Use district.

Plans for meeting on Dec. 10 with constituents were outlined. It was agreed that, following the approval of the minutes, the Chair will provide an introductory welcome indicating that the main purpose of the evening will be to hear from people who have concerns and solutions with the new zoning. This will include a history of how we got to this point of passing Village Center Zoning, its goal, and the process for taking any action. A public comment period will follow to hear from anyone in attendance who wishes to be heard on the main subject brought forward by those concerned with the effect the zoning may have. Clarifications by the Board will be provided as necessary, but no decision will be made that evening as to actions the Board may take.

Public comment period. Kristin DeBoer, who has raised concerns about the new zoning in the VC Neighborhood district, indicated that she hopes we can compromise and problem solve on the issue of retaining restaurant/bar/entertainment less than 2500 square feet in the VCN district. She says that people in the area don't want those uses and provided a handout to the Board with her concerns, reasons, and plan for changing the zoning. This handout is appended to these minutes.

DeBoer explained that this is an emotional issue for people who live there and that she neither trusts the Special Permit process to protect her interests nor believes it was adequately represented before the vote at town meeting in May. Eiseman agreed that having the question called so prematurely did not allow for the audience to have a chance to raise questions or get into details of the zoning proposal. At the same time, Eiseman suggested that there may be other ways to move forward other than that provided in DeBoer's handout such as adding additional language and direction to the zoning bylaw to clarify the vision. DeBoer's essential point is that given that much of the land or lots are for one reason or another unsuitable for this use, it should not be included at all. The Board indicated skepticism that these uses if they are brought forward would be detrimental since the bylaw has sufficient safeguards and means for public input. All agreed that safety concerns are paramount as we move forward with the Village Center vision.

Dan Robb, Kristin DeBoer and Abbie Jenks, as Chair, will meet December 4th to discuss his concerns as well.

See attached letters from neighbors in Village Center.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm

Attachments:



Abbie Jenks
Chair: Planning Board Town of Pelham

Dear Abbie,

I am writing to express my support of Pelham's zoning district changes to the West Pelham Village Center that was passed at the spring town meeting. I am very much in favor of the mixed-use possibilities in the two Village Center Neighborhood areas (colored orange on the Town map) such as a small village store modeled by the success of the Cushman Village Store in North Amherst. A village store would give us the possibility of local shopping and a café style-gathering place where neighbors could meet and visit with neighbors. There is precedent for this type of establishment in the old Pelham General Store of many years ago. I live on Jones Road, and I would be very excited about the possibilities of such an enterprise.

Now some neighbors in the Village Center Neighborhood areas have expressed concern regarding an expansion of the zoning district to include commercial entities in their section of Amherst Road. I believe this to be an unwarranted concern, and an attempt by some folks to instill fear in our town's populace of an imminent invasion of unsavory and potentially dangerous commercial interests. The Town of Pelham would be more likely to be hit by an asteroid than by a sports bar or a strip club.

Please record me as supporting the bylaws as they were passed at Spring town meeting. A favorable vote for a limited commercial presence in the Village Center Neighborhood and Mixed Use areas of town.

Most Sincerely,

David Rabinovitz
27 Jones Road