

Planning Board Meeting Date: March 19th, 2025

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: In-person/Zoom

Attendees In-person: Dee Daley (Chair), Shawn Talbot (Ex Officio) Bruce Ruotsala, Craig Smeeth, Graham Heagy, Aaron Bertram, Robert Fournier, Lou Alvarez

7:00 PM – Roll Call/ Pledge of Allegiance

7:03 PM - Approval of Previous Minutes

- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- **Motion** made to review and approve the previous meeting's minutes:
 - Minor spelling and name corrections were noted ("Bertram" spelled incorrectly in one section; "Chad Branon" spelling corrected).
 - **Vote:** Motion to approve with corrections passed unanimously.

7:10 PM - Old/New Business

Election of Officers

MOTION: Shawn made a motion to nominate Dee Daley as Chair and Josh Muhonen as Vice Chair. Seconded by Craig. Vote passed unanimously.

Select Board Ex Officio Discussion

- Lou Alvarez (new Select Board member) Shawn updated the group that expressed interest in serving on the Planning Board as part of the Select Board review of assignments and Lou will be starting as the new Select Board Member Ex Officio.
- Board discussed Shawn's continuity for larger projects if there is a potential need (e.g., Brookhaven)
- Shawn will continue as a member of the Master Plan Steering Group

Select/Land Use Updates and Discussion

1. Building #2

- Ongoing concern about gradual disrepair and possible leaks
- Currently leased to Warwick Mills for storage; minimal revenue offset.
- Discussion on whether to demolish, renovate for a new purpose, or propose a new safety complex (fire/police/EMS combined).
- Need to clarify potential benefits/costs, gather public input, and possibly place a warrant article on a future ballot to decide the building's fate.
- Action: Seek broader community input; consider a joint meeting with the Select Board, Planning and other relevant groups to hash out potential plans once a historical document trail is established to assist in decision making.

2. Other Properties & Infrastructure

- Old Fire Department Building: Not much progress on use or sale; complicated deed/parking arrangements.
- Old Town Garage across from Boynton: Soil testing is underway (environmental concerns).
- Shawn educated the Planning Board members who may lack some history that the Town recognizing the importance of fully assessing properties before selling or repurposing, to consider potential risks or liabilities.

3. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

- Discussion on the CIP's importance in guiding spending and planning for large-scale purchases (e.g., police cruisers, fire vehicles, building maintenance).
- Emphasis on using CIP data to inform steady funding levels.
- Master Plan feedback will also influence the CIP and larger community priorities.
- New system has been loaded with upcoming Planning and Select Board introduction of the information (and possible refinements before heading into development of Master Plan related projects and 2026 data submissions)
- Department heads have been asked for more detailed, multi-year planning to refine CIP allocations.

Warrant Articles and Zoning Matters

Cluster Subdivision Warrant Article

- The proposed Zoning Article **did not pass** at Town Meeting.
- Discussion on possible reasons:
 - Lack of public awareness and/or late opposition.
 - Concerns about density, "rural feel," buffers, water capacity, and complaints it may not have directly influenced affordability.
- Next Steps:
 - Board will revisit cluster subdivision language in August.
 - Potential to incorporate affordable housing considerations more explicitly and address water/well constraints.
 - Public outreach, additional listening sessions and improved education will be key to any revised article.

Additional Zoning/Future Planning Topics to Work On in the Next Year

- **Wells and Water Capacity:**
 - Concern about wells going dry and ensuring there is adequate supply for new developments.
 - Plan to invite a water resource professional to educate the Board on well viability, shared wells, and hydrogeological considerations.
- **Slopes and Ridgeline Development:**

- Desire to protect scenic elements of town that allow some development without detrimental impacts on steep slopes or ridgelines.
- **Municipal Water/Sewer:**
 - Briefly mentioned that compact development often hinges on sewer/water infrastructure or shared wells that may need to be considered in the future.
 - General sense that the town is not inclined to fund large-scale municipal water/sewer but will keep the conversation open for future planning.

Master Plan Updates

- **Master Plan Forum:** Scheduled (two sessions on a Saturday, late afternoon and early evening).
- **Survey Participation:**
 - About 350 responses so far.
 - Board members encouraged to share the link and urge residents to complete it.
 - School newsletter, Recreation Department events/emails, library, town office, bulletin boards and Facebook used for outreach.
 - Notices about surveys were distributed with town reports at elections
- **Facilitation:** Groups will be led by various Steering Committee members and volunteers to gather public input on priorities, strengths, and challenges for the town.
- **Next Steps:** Anticipate a follow-up meeting in early May to review initial survey data and feedback from the forum.

Wetland Boundary Signage

- Board revisited the idea of requiring developers to post small signs along wetland boundaries.
- Discussion on size, wording (“Protected Wetland,” relevant RSA references, etc.).
- Sample placards were reviewed (preference for 4-5 in. discs that can be customized versus bigger/commercial signs)
- Rob will bring suggested language/format for these signs to a future meeting.

Planning Board Engineer and Legal Reviews

- Officially acknowledged the transition to a new Planning Board Engineer
- **Escrow for Engineering Fees/Legal Costs:**
 - Board agreed to require an engineer escrow deposit (\$2,000 initial) for application review.
 - If applications require legal review, HOAs, private roads, or shared driveways escrow deposit (\$1,000 initial) Which would be similar to engineering escrow, funds not used would be returned to the applicant.

Fee Schedule and Application Process

- The Board reviewed updates to the application workflow and fee schedule (proposed increases for subdivision/site plan reviews).

- Aim is to cover administrative time and reduce the financial burden on the town for engineer and legal reviews.

MOTION: Craig makes a motion to hold public hearings on April 2nd (7:20 PM) and, if needed, April 16th (7:20 PM) to adopt the updated application process and fee schedule. Seconded by Graham. Vote passed unanimously.

Gravel Pit Reviews

- Bruce traditionally leads yearly gravel pit inspections; Craig will assist.
- They will coordinate schedules and invite additional Board members as needed.

8:36 PM – Adjournment

Craig makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by the Board, Vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Steven Satterfield