

**TOWN OF SHEFFIELD
PLANNING BOARD
JANUARY 11, 2023
VIA ZOOM 7:00 PM**

Board Members Present: George Oleen, Chairman
Kenneth Smith
Sari Hoy
Robbie Cooper

Others: CJ Hoss, Berkshire Regional Planning Committee

Chairman Oleen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

CJ Hoss discussed his position as the representative/manager of the Berkshire Regional Planning Committee (BRPC), he also stated that through the District Local Technical Assistant (DLTA) program he can provide educational assistance to the Board and help increase the Community's understanding of what the Planning Board does. It was the consensus of the Board to work with CJ.

Chairman Oleen stated that since the minutes from November 9th meeting were not included in the meeting packet that was sent last week the Board would table the minutes to the next week.

S. Hoy asked about whether a new assistant to the Board has been hired. Chairman Oleen stated yes, but that he would not be responsible for taking the minutes. The Board discussed who was responsible for taking the minutes, it noted that Administrator LaBombard had prepared the last couple of set. The Board is behind on minutes for the last two scheduled meetings.

Dark Sky Bylaw:

K. Smith discussed the amendments that he made to the draft bylaw and how the amendments will maintain the rural character of Sheffield by ensuring that no unnecessary light pollution be permitted. The Board discussed the definitions that should be included regarding dark skies and it was determined that the sign bylaws should be updated to cover the non-commercial use of outdoor internally lit signs. The discussion continued regarding the meaning "real property". K. Smith stated that he believed it was an actual house on the property as opposed to a mere shed like structure.

K. Smith advocated the removal of section 6.3.3 (D) as "other Permits" language was unnecessary to accomplish the purpose of the Dark Sky Bylaw as detailed in the Purpose section. At this time the Board discussed what types of circumstances would trigger a change of use with regard to this Bylaw. Additionally, Section 6.3.4 number 4 of the Main Provision was removed as the Board viewed it as overreaching and unnecessary in light of the portion of the Bylaw that deals directly with Security Lighting. The Board also determined that they should remove the curfew section of the Bylaw as S. Hoy thinks that the public would be upset by such a limitation. The Board decided to remove section 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the Public Lighting portion of the Dark Sky Bylaw. Furthermore, the enforcement section of the Dark Sky Bylaw was removed as well.

K. Smith suggested the plan to exempt Holiday Lighting. A discussion concerning exemptions for statutes, art installations, and cultural landmarks ensued, in which S. Hoy put forward a plan to allow for special permits to allow bottom up illumination in certain circumstances. The example discussed was the statute of Elizabeth Freeman in front of the local church. The Board felt that illuminating the statute from the top down in this situation would not be sensible and therefore, would require a special permit to allow for bottom up lighting. K. Smith closed the discussion of the Dark Sky Bylaws by saying that he would make the agreed upon changes and revisit the matter at the next meeting.

Tiny Homes:

The Board discussed the idea of establishing requirements for tiny homes within the current Bylaws.

Chairman Oleen spoke about the impact of fossil fuels on the community and how tiny houses would likely have a lesser impact on the environment. K. Smith suggested that the Board look into Great Barrington's Bylaws regarding for tiny homes and copy what they have. Chairman Oleen made the comment that the lot size for a tiny home should be at a minimum one acre and that we could reduce it to be more accommodating to tiny homes.

Discussion continued regarding the theoretical needs of a family living in a tiny home. A family's needs may change over time as the family grows, but there would have to be an occupancy limit on the tiny homes so that we don't have too many people living in too small of an area. Also discussed was composting toilets, foundations, trailers and size. S. Hoy said that for the public that cannot afford a traditional house, a tiny home is a great option, it will bring in more people to the town because the tiny homes will be more affordable. Furthermore, she advocated having some pre-approved designs for the tiny homes so that the Planning Board would not have to approve the design plans and hold up the home buying process. Chairman Oleen stated that the Planning Board is not responsible to approving homes that is the responsibility of the Building Inspector.

It was the consensus of the Board to table this discussion until the next meeting.

Budget:

The Board discussed the expenses in the current budget, it was the consensus of the Board to leave line items as current with the exception of the postage line items, which they added \$200.00. They increased the line item for state travel to \$300 and added a stipend of \$200 per member. There was discussion regarding postage and the Board decided to include it in the budget request. The Board discussed conferences, Chairman Oleen stated that Tammy mentioned that there might be an overnight conference that the Board could attend and that she would look into that for them K. Smith moved to approve the budget as discussed and was seconded by R. Cooper, the Motion carried unanimously.

Marijuana Bylaw:

The Board began discussion regarding a draft Marijuana bylaw from the Select Board and stated how angry they were with having this shoved down their throats. K. Smith stated that the State has stopped the Host Community fees. It was the consensus of the members that they did not want to gut the current bylaw. One resident of Sheffield out of approximately 3,500 has made a complaint regarding the smell of the Marijuana industry in Sheffield. Chairman Oleen stated that he can't smell it even though people tell him that it smells like a skunk, he doesn't think skunks smell. S. Hoy believes that the cannabis bylaws are good as they stand, she further spoke about how the company "Sundrops" employees at least three full time employees in Sheffield and that the owners contribute to the local community by staying at Racebrook Lodge. S. Hoy would like to see increased cannabis activity in Sheffield as she believes it will help the local economy. Chairman Oleen expressed his concerns that the employees being hired are not local. The Board continued the discussion and expressed their concerns with the Select Board turning this draft over to the Citizen's Group for a petition. S. Hoy stated that Select Board member Rene Wood stated that this bylaw should help the Planning Board and S. Hoy doesn't need Rene to do her any favors by reducing their work. S. Hoy stated that maybe they should placate the Board by giving a little something. It was the consensus of the Board to have Chairman Oleen send an email stating that the Planning Board wishes to take no action.

Board Member Items:

The Board discussed Brittany who has applied for the vacancy on the Planning Board. Chairman Oleen would like to meet her before she is appointed. The Board discussed the process of appointment. R. Cooper will reach out to Brittany to invite her to the next meeting.

S. Hoy brought up her concern that she would like the Board to look into changing the Table of Use bylaw for Multi-Family units to be "by right" instead of "by Planning Board." She thinks that this change should be done in both rural areas as well as within the village center. S. Hoy indicated that at least 4 units should be changed to "by right," and furthermore, that the dimensional requirements of the Multi-Family units should be reviewed as well. K. Smith agreed to come up with a draft bylaw for changing the Multi-Family units to be "by right" instead of by "Planning Board" and to bring the draft with him to the next scheduled meeting.

The next scheduled meeting of the Planning Board is January 25th 2023 at 7:00PM

K. Smith made a motion to adjourn, seconded by R. Copper. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Oleen adjourned the meeting

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rhonda LaBombard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Josh Risen/Rhonda LaBombard
Board Administrator/Town Administrator