

MINUTES
PLANNING BOARD
November 3, 2021
Via Zoom and in-person

Present: Deirdre Daley (Chair) – in person, Shawn Talbot (Ex-Officio) – in person, Lou Alvarez - in person, John Schaumlöffel- online, Nate Sikkila- in person, Josh Muhonen- in person, Tim Somero- in person, Craig Smeeth- online, and Jennifer Minckler- in person. Craig Smeeth sat in for John Schaumlöffel due to audio issue. Deirdre Daley took roll call attendance.

Selectmen/Chair/Land Use Report: Shawn reported that last night, the Board of Selectman approved the acceptance of Valley Road and the release of the Bond for Redfield Homes, LLC Valley Road. Shawn then discussed the complaints by several citizens of speeding. Selectman Jason Somero, the police liaison will be speaking with Chief Abel regarding this. The Land Use Clerk had nothing to report. Deirdre will not be attending the meeting on November 17 and suggested a work session or no meeting at all. Deirdre mentioned placing a document into Dropbox about Information on Zoning Regulations, mobile homes, tiny homes etc. Deirdre believes we can utilize to differentiate and make a table to reference for future use. It was decided that there will be a work group for 11/17/2021 meeting and the focus would be on existing workgroup projects. The next meeting as a group to be held on December 1, 2021. Deirdre advised the Planning Board that the 7:30 time slot was to be for the Public Hearing for Dean and Martha Bertram but they are meeting with the Zoning Board of Appeals tomorrow night and requested the Public Hearing continuation to a date certain December 1, 2021. There was a motion to postpone the Bertram hearing to date certain 12/1/2021. Motion made by Nate Sikkila, seconded by Lou Alvarez. Motion was unanimous. The Public Hearing will be continued to December 1, 2021 at 7:30.

Minutes of October 20, 2021: Minimal changes made to the minutes. There was one correction made from the Meeting of October 20, 2021. It was advised at that meeting that an intent to excavate came in for Brookhaven from the Department of Environmental Services but it was actual a notice of Alteration of Terrain permit with conditions. The minutes of October 20, 2021 reflect this as a noted correction. Motion to accept to accept the minutes as amended by Shawn. Seconded by Josh Muhonen. Motion carries unanimously. The minutes are adopted.

Other Discussions:

NBT Irrevocable Letter of Credit for Paul Somero and Redfield Homes, LLC Valley Rd/Hidden Valley acres- All four conditions have been met which are:

- Submission of HOA Articles of Incorporation,
- Cistern plans received by the Fire Dept with confirmation that the Cistern is maintained by the Fire department and is 10,000 gallons,
- as-built approved with red stamp on plans,
- Deeding of the common land to the HOA.

Deirdre mentioned that a letter was submitted to the Board of Selectman to conditionally approve the release of the bond prior to the Planning Board voting due to the time constraint of bond expiring November 5, 2021. It was confirmed that the Deed was received shortly after the request was sent to the Selectmen (the Selectman did receive a copy of the deed information). Motion to recommend to the Selectman that they release the bond by Shawn Talbot, seconded by Nate. No further discussion. Motion carries unanimously.

Old/New Business:

Underground Utilities- after much discussion it was recommended by the Planning Board to attach the Underground Utility Work Group report as amended to the minutes. Shawn motioned to accept the report. Lou Alvarez seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion unanimous. Motion carries. Work group report – Appendix A

Motion to adjourn by Josh Muhonen. Seconded by Nate Sikkila

Adjourn at 8:13pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Minckler
Land Use Administrator

Work Group Report – Underground Utilities

Underground utilities policy/practices for the town of New Ipswich, New Hampshire

BACKGROUND: The purpose of this report is to clarify and strengthen Planning Board decision criteria regarding underground utilities. For the purposes of this paper, utilities are defined as electric & broadband services provided by non-governmental sources. Cost factors vary per situation and are determined by the utility provider, however all costs are directly absorbed by the property owner.

-At the time of this writing, Eversource and Comcast are the primary service providers for our town
-State and public utilities guidance for residential and business customers was essential to crafting the below guidance.

According to Mr. Paul Kasper, Assistant Director of Safety for New Hampshire Department of Energy, state guidance on underground utilities is intentionally sparse. Excavating guidance (AKA DIG guidance) is the only regulatory guidance governing underground utilities. DIG guidance mandates all excavations are reported and approved by state officials. Towns are responsible for crafting their own excavation guidance and insuring residents/commercial business adhere to local policies.

NI allows for underground and overhead utility service. Mr. Kasper highlighted underground utilities for new construction are the preferred method. Our current town regulations mandates this policy and is captured in our sub-division regulations and permit checklist. Waivers are not uncommon, with waiver criteria being situational dependent and require our town's engineer guidance in the decision process.

All consulted parties highlighted the importance of consistency in the decision process. With over 40 years experience in the private and public sectors, Mr. Kasper specifically commented when deciding to grant utility excavation waivers to be ready for a "fight" when the consistency is not employed.

Current town regulation does not fully address waiver criteria/process employed to exempt builders from burying utilities lines

PROS:

-Buried utilities are aesthetically pleasing as they preserve our rural appearance
-Buried power lines offer a degree of safety, they are protected from the wind, ice, and tree damage they also lessen the potential of fires caused by fallen lines

CONS:

- Burying utilities is very costly (10:1 ratio with costs varying per situation)
- Buried power lines require heavier gauges of cable (due to power loss)
- Trouble-shooting infrastructure is timely and challenging especially in the winter
- Maintenance frequently requires earth-moving equipment to resolve problems
- Buried cables are vulnerable to underground flooding

RECOMMENDATION:

When determining whether to grant a waiver to the requirement that utilities be installed underground, the Planning Board shall take the following factors into consideration: the recommendation of the Town Engineer, topographical constraints, wetlands, or any other conditions which make underground installations unreasonable or impractical.

**Richard C. Smeeth & John Schaumloffel // Alternate NI Planning Board Members//26 Oct 2021Sources: Mr. Paul Kasper, Assistant Director of Safety for New Hampshire Department of Energy
Eversource, COMCAST, DIG excavation criteria & supplemented via numerous on-line resources**