

Town of Starksboro  
Planning Commission meeting  
Minutes of July 21, 2022  
Unapproved

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Board members present: Dennis Casey, Brad Boss, David Schmidt, Jeff Keeney, Denny Barnard  
Unable to attend: Dan Harris, Dan Nugent  
Others present: Rebecca Elder, Alexsys Thompson, Chris Acker, Melanie Acker

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The meeting was called to order to 6:30 p.m. by Chair Dennis Casey. The meeting was in person at the Town Office and via Zoom.

Visitor's Business - none

### Current Topics

#### Village Area Planning

**Discussion** about maps (copies distributed to review village high density district). D. Casey spoke with Leslie Rublee about any interest in selling or developing a portion of the land on the east side of 116. Mr. Rublee is not currently interested. The PC continues to look for land that would present opportunities for growth in the village area. If water system improvements were made and additional capacity were confirmed, the village area could accommodate more lots (no wells needed with protection zones).

#### Bylaw Review planning

The board talked about ways to solicit input from the community about areas of the bylaws that need improvement or clarification. The last round of minor changes in 2020 was focused on clarifying language. The board is looking at the zoning district boundaries, how to increase uses in the medium and high density districts, and other changes. The group agreed it is a good time for another planning survey. Rebecca will circulate the responses to the last survey. New questions should aim to gather a broad range of input about planning for the future of the town and how zoning laws affect implementation of planning and vision long term. This is opportunity to rethink how to support cottage industry and home businesses; expanded uses for small businesses and people working from home; scaled smart growth for the village area for residential and businesses.

#### Village growth opportunities

Chris Acker, owner of land and gravel pit at the south end of village, attended at the invitation of the planning commission to talk about potential development ideas this area of town on the 116 corridor. The PC stated there needs to be a draw to get people to move here and to stop here on their commutes and vacations. There was a wide-ranging conversation about many ideas of small businesses that could succeed in this area. Ideas included a country store with gas, an auto mechanic shop, a commercial kitchen space for rent to chefs and caterers, an office co-working space with meeting rooms. Housing needs were also discussed—housing that is affordable for younger families is needed as well as stable elder housing.

The group agreed to continue brain-storming about possibilities and include ideas for feedback in the survey. Include a question about businesses and what small business/cottage industry ideas people have that are restricted by the current bylaws. How can language be shifted to allow for more creativity in land uses while still maintaining the values and character of the town?

#### July 7 Minutes

**Motion:** Jeff Keeney moved to approve with corrections. David Schmidt second.

**Vote:** Motion approved unanimously.

## MAUSD Merger Update and Withdrawal vote

There will be an informational meeting held on 8/4 to be hosted by the MAUSD. The information distributed by the school district anticipated a tax increase of up to 17%. The Save our Schools group's analysis says the increase would be closer to 5%. The MAUSD is not allowing information from the SOS group to be part of the informational meeting. The group is looking to distribute in other ways and asks Starksboro residents to help share information with friends in neighboring towns of Monkton, New Haven, and Bristol.

## ARPA Committee Update

Jeff reported on the work of the committee to date. They created a brief community values survey to help them evaluate proposals that will come in. Announcements about the proposal process and deadlines will be shared on social media and the town website shortly.

## PC Roundtable

Jeff Keeney brought up the statutory process for appointing a Zoning Administrator. He shared language with the board and advised the PC make a motion to nominate a candidate for the Selectboard's decision on appointment. The Selectboard previously appointed two staff members to ensure coverage in the zoning office.

**Motion:** Jeff Keeney made a motion to nominate Rebecca Elder as Zoning Administrator and Amy McCormick as Assistant Zoning Administrator and recommend their appointment by the Selectboard. Denny Barnard second.

**Vote:** Motion approved unanimously.

Next meeting: **August 4, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.**

- Denny Casey unable to attend due to MAUSD info meeting on same date.
- Follow up discussion about legislative change discussion re: MHP statutes and Vermods
- Invitation to Jeremy Revell from LAG for 8/18 meeting re: water systems

**Motion to adjourn at 9:10 p.m.:** B. Boss moved, D. Barnard second.

**Vote:** Motion approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder