

Town of Starksboro
Planning Commission meeting
Minutes of November 4, 2021
Draft

Board members present: Dennis Casey, Brad Boss, Jeff Keeney, Denny Barnard, Dan Nugent, Rodney Orvis

Unable to attend: Dan Harris

Others present: Kris Perlee (ZA), Herb Olson

The meeting was called to order to 7:15 p.m. by Chair Dennis Casey. The meeting was in person at the Town Office and conducted via ZOOM video/teleconference.

Visitor's Business – none

Current Business

Discussion of MAUSD Merger Plans

H. Olson gave an update for the Save Our Schools (SOS) committee.

- District and Superintendent have been proponents of closers
 - School board originally agreed, but has since paused
- SU hired outside consultant, should have report by December
- Asked for community input, received 5 – 7 suggestions
- No input from school board as of now
- Also, merger study taking place (Mt Abe/Vergennes)
- Current agreement allows towns to vote on closures, merger may remove vote option.
- Merger would require vote by both SUs, all towns in each SU lumped into one vote

J. Keeney asked if merger would help kids. D. Barnard asked if national test data available, H. Olson said no recent data available. H. Olson said the primary drivers are shrinking enrollment, cost savings, and centralizing support. H. Olson also stated that SOS has a website. J. Keeney asked if merger committee has own power. H. Olson said that they would make a recommendation, this would then be reviewed by the State, and then sent to voters. B. Boss asked what the savings are. H. Olson said that they have been told the saving would be around 3 million dollars. He feels that the SU is overstaffed and cut could be made there for savings. D. Nugent explained that there are many policies that cost money and these policies are often requested by parents. J. Keeney asked if the consultant was going to review the merger or the closures. H. Olson said closures. D. Nugent discussed how school budgets have changed from fixed and pupil spending to a single per pupil model. H. Olson feels that the SU will continue to push for closures until the populations start to increase. Towns need to show they are viable and will promote growth. The PC has a roll. Asked if town could focus on young family housing. J. Keeney said that the State has created many of the barrier of promoting growth. H. Olson once again asked the PC to try to make it easier for young home buyers. D. Nugent asked ho to do this. R. Orvis stated that poor paying jobs has created much of the problem. B. Boss stated that Starksboro needs to build to attract new people to town. K. Perlee stated that the PC could focus on modifying the town plan the zoning regulations. J. Keeney stated that Starksboro needs to attract businesses. H. Olson aske that the PC attend the public meeting on November 16th.

Review past work on Zoning Bylaw revision.

A discussion occurred around next plan for zoning changes. D. Nugent suggested that they focus on creating a business district. Discussion occurred around where to do this. The PC focused on the Freedom Acres area. There was discussion on people resisting the possible zoning changes. K. Perlee said that the PC should focus on changes they feel are correct and not to worry about the handful of outspoken opponents. B. Boss asked about the zoning on the Purington lot on N. 116. He had concerns about access. K. Perlee explained that lot was on both sides of the house along 116. He produced a map of the area. After more discussion K. Perlee suggested that the PC begin making changes. H will send out maps to the PC and asked them to draw in any changes they would like to see. He stated that everything is on the table right now and the board will discuss the suggestions in upcoming meetings.

Approve September 16, 2021 Minutes

Motion to approve with corrections by D. Barnard, 2nd J. Keeney. So voted (6-0)

Next meeting will be **November 18th**

Motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.: D. Nugent moved, J. Keeney second. (So voted 6-0)