

Town of Starksboro
Planning Commission meeting
Minutes of July 16, 2020
Approved

Board members present: Dennis Casey, Denny Barnard, Dan Nugent, Rodney Orvis, Brad Boss
Unable to attend: Dan Harris, Jeff Keeney
Others present: Rebecca Elder (ZA)

The meeting was called to order to 7:00 p.m. by Chair Dennis Casey. The meeting was conducted via ZOOM video/teleconference.

The introductory statement regarding open meeting law and how public meetings are being conducted in the Town of Starksboro due to the State of Emergency declared by Governor Scott as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and pursuant to Addendum 6 to Executive Order 01-20 and Act 92, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

In accordance with Act 92, there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously, however the meeting was conducted with public access via internet or telephone with the ability to listen/interact contemporaneously.

Visitor's Business – none

Current Business

Discussion of proposal from ACCT regarding Town support of a community block grant application for assessment of infrastructure in three mobile home parks in Starksboro. ACCT sent the Selectboard a revised memo regarding the request for Town support for a community block grant request for assessment of infrastructure in the 3 MHPs in Starksboro. Elise stated that ACCT is trying to address things before a crisis regarding septic systems failing, water line issues, and private road conditions that need repair.

The board discussed many topics pertaining to the MHPs in general, and about challenges in each park. Lazy Brook and Hillside have septic system and water system challenges that aren't as prevalent in Brookside, for example.

Key points:

Floodplain questions; Rodney Orvis stated that ACCT should apply to FEMA for a LOMA (letter of map amendment). If a LOMA is not issued, then further discussion would be required before any permits should be issued in the areas of the park with flooding issues/direct proximity to the brook.

Infrastructure challenges: the board is concerned about "best fix solutions" that will limit the long-term planning possibilities for the land.

Motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.: Dan Nugent moved, Brad Boss second.

Motion was approved unanimously.

Next meeting: 8/6/2020 at 7 p.m. TENTATIVE; TBC

(see statement on next page)

Statement from the Planning Commission to the Selectboard

RE: ACCT request for Town support of community block grant for infrastructural assessment

The Planning Commission met and reviewed the memo from Addison County Community Trust to the Starksboro Selectboard dated June 26, 2020 along with the municipal policies required by VCDP for all grant applicants. The board discussed the proposal from a planning perspective, looking at goals in the Town Plan and policy developed through the Unified Land Use and Development Regulations (Bylaws), as well as the long-term sustainability and quality of life for residents of the three mobile home parks in town.

The PC continues to hope for and wants to see improvements that will benefit people through real change, not best fixes. The group would like to see a feasibility study of how to enhance the parks and make them better, not to keep them the same. From a planning perspective, feasibility of a redevelopment plan for long-term affordable housing and multi-family units would be most helpful and a better use of resources.

The Town has a fair amount of historical information on the septic capacity and soils of the three locations. Based on what is known, there is significant doubt that there is room for a community system in the MHPs. The PC does not see individual replacement systems to be the best approach for the long-term planning for the land or the communities in the MHPs.

The PC feels strongly that the Town cannot have confidence in the end results of the feasibility study or that the implementation will improve the future of the parks or the residents if the project scope is limited to what is outlined in the 6/26 memo.

Without ownership, the town has no recourse on any decision(s) made.

If the Town proceeds with the grant application, the PC suggests the grant administration be handled by a town employee. The board expressed concern about staff capacity and how this work would be incorporated.