

Town of Starksboro
Planning Commission meeting
April 4, 2019
Unapproved

Board members: Dennis Casey, Jeff Keeney, Denny Barnard, Dan Nugent, Brad Boss, Dan Harris
Unable to attend: none
Others present: Rebecca Elder (ZA), Koran Cousino, Elise Shanbacker, Colby Little, Chris Oulette

The meeting was called to order 7:00 p.m. by Chair Dennis Casey.

There were no changes to the agenda.

Visitor's business

Koran Cousino, Selectboard Chair, gave an update on various SB projects. Jeff Keeney asked if Green Lantern Solar is still interested in other land in town, once the current project on the former landfill is complete. Koran noted that they are interested but there could be limitations in terms of infrastructure (e.g. the GMP line may be maxed out until upgrades are completed).

Mobile Home Parks Discussion

The PC invited staff from the Addison County Community Trust to a conversation regarding the three mobile home parks in Starksboro. The ACCT staff present included: Elise Shanbacker (executive director), Colby Little (property manager), and Chris Oulette (MHP manager).

E. Shanbacker began by describing the history and mission of ACCT. Her background is in public policy. Colby Benjamin manage parks; oversees the bigger picture including capital projects, roads, septic, power to the homes, water systems, trees; oversees the budgets and projects. Chris Oulette took over management of the MHPs in February after Mary Jackman departed. She is learning the process and what the towns are expecting from her as manager. She is the day-to-day contact and liaison for ACCT with all its MHPs (not just Starksboro).

Ground water systems are to be overseen by the park manager who is in communication with Chris. ACCT is doing a trial program in Lazy Brook with residents serving as the daily monitors (volunteers) to save money. They will assess how it is going and if the reporting is accurate and consistent.

Public water systems – water operator is a contractor.

B. Boss noted ACCT has an annual budget of \$200K received in fees. E. Shanbacker explained that the parks pay for operating expenses (administrative, electric, fuel for pump, grounds and roads, plowing, trash contracts) and that is included in that line. B. Boss asked if there is ever any money to ever put back in the parks? ACCT: Rarely. That is why they pursue grant funding to support infrastructure upgrades and other expenses outside of operations.

MHPs were established 40+ years ago as more temporary/transitional housing. Now, homes are owned and occupied by families for decades. The housing is more permanent or long term, but the infrastructure wasn't built to support that extended use. Now upgrades are needed more frequently and ACCT needs to figure out to how to address in terms of funding and state and local permitting.

Because the homes are resident owned and the land is owned by ACCT, each is limited in what they can do and there must be good communication to ensure compliance.

The PC asked how ACCT views the parks in the community?

E. Shanbacker talked about various engagement opportunities they are planning for; ACCT has worked with UVM and Dan Baker on some assessments and planning in the past. The food program in the summer has been successful. The New Community Project has planted fruit-bearing trees at some of the parks. The ACCT staff continues to think about ways to be helpful to the MHP communities.

E. Shanbacker said they are committed to pride of ownership of any type of home; keeping yards available for each home; keeping some privacy; there is not a push to change to multi-family units.

The board asked ACCT's perspective on "Vermod" type homes. ACCT has seen a few move into parks. Unfortunately, they are expensive and require a foundation/frost walls and are not built on a permanent chassis. Starksboro Bylaws do not currently permit Vermod style homes because they are not "mobile" by definition.

Jeff asked what kind of control ACCT has with regard to accessory structures. ACCT cannot remove or tear down personal property. However, the leases that are signed do stipulate that mobile home owners must comply with local regulations and bylaws. ACCT only allows one shed type structure per lot.

There is ongoing research needed on the intersection of municipal zoning codes and state mobile home park laws. Because Starksboro's parks are pre-existing, nonconforming lots, there is much to consider in order to process applications for permits to allow the homeowner as much leeway as possible and also ensuring safety and appropriate setbacks from other structures.

Chris Oullette stated that she plans to visit the parks each week. She is working on systems to manage information and the communications with the park residents.

The board asked what the consequences are for residents who don't abide by the lease agreement and local bylaws. ACCT said they do have to pursue owners for nonpayment or abandonment. It is very expensive and incurs legal fees. Often even after an eviction process, there is significant clean up of a site to remove rubbish, old structure(s), etc.

There is refinancing of the parks that's needed. ACCT is pursuing a community block grant and other funding streams. They are doing assessment work and need to leverage funding to make the most impact.

ACCT knows that the internal lot lines has blurred over time as homes have been replaced. ACCT observed the half-way line between lots as a general rule.

The ACCT staff said that the complaints they hear most often are: roads, plowing, dogs/cleaning up after them, rats, neighbor trash. They will be holding a "dumpster day" soon to help with clean up.

D. Harris suggested as homes move in/out that ACCT leave some room for landscaping and try to establish more of a neighborhood with screening between homes. That may help alleviate some of the neighbor to neighbor issues and provide more privacy.

Rodney Orvis noted that Lazy Brook park is in the 100-yr floodplain. He asked if the lease holders need to be notified? The PC noted that ACCT owns the land and is therefore responsible for the trailers being in the floodplain. ACCT should apply for a LOAMA and go through the process with FEMA for proper identification and waiver if needed.

Guests departed at 9:00 p.m.

[Minutes of 3/21/19](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of 3/21/19: Denny Barnard, Dan Nugent 2nd

Motion carried.

Other business:

Denny Casey and Rebecca visited Hinesburg's Director of Planning and Zoning Alex Weinhegen to discuss some zoning issues. They discussed community water systems, state permitting, ways to support infrastructure improvements at the planning level. Alex shared some resources regarding mobile home park guidelines and permitting requirements from the State.

Motion to adjourn: Denny Barnard, Brad Boss 2nd

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder

Zoning Administrator

DRAFT