

**Charlemont Planning Board**  
**April 21, 2022 6:00 pm Meeting Minutes**  
**Via conference call and in person, Town Hall**

Members Participating: Bob Nelson Chair, Gisela Walker, Carlene Hayden, Colleen Champ, Lori Shulda-Merrigan

Others Participating:  
Star Atkeson secretary, Robert Burrington

Call to Order  
Called to order by consensus at 6:00 p.m.

Appointments

- 1) Bob Burrington explained his plans to readjust the lot line between his two parcels to the planning board. Bob had additional plans to discuss at a future date, and needed to know what the setback number was from a leach field to a property line.

The ANR form (*Approval Not Required*, a subdivision regulation) is signed for Mr. Burrington by Carlene Hayden, Gisela Walker, Bob Nelson and Colleen Champ

- GWalker explained the subdivision regulation to the new Board Members and Secretary with the explanation that Burrington didn't need to abide by subdivision regulation because he is only adjusting the lot line between his two parcels, which had the 150 feet frontage on a way in existence.
- 2) Helen Carcio was unable to attend the meeting and was in touch with Carlene Hayden. CHayden explained that Helen would like to add a 12'x10' check-in booth at their Great Outdoors property. The Board needs more information and would like to have Helen come in to a meeting; Carlene will let Helen know this.

Action Item

Motion made at 7:07 by BNelson, seconded by CHayden to approve minutes from April 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. All in favor.

Discussion Topics

- 1) Proposed Zoning Bylaw revisions Agriculture Uses language.
  - CHayden would like to define poultry in an attempt to add clarity around the regulations. CChamp suggested adding the words "with the exception" to footnote 2 in order to provide clarity on what will be allowed.
  - The revisions of Section 32.2 Use Table were passed out with revisions struck in red. The language for "Commercial Agriculture" in town is discussed. With the struck text gone and "with the exception" added, it will read: ***Commercial Agriculture: the keeping or raising of livestock, including piggeries, large ruminants and poultry on a lot two (2) acres or less(2) with a number denotation for a footnote stating with the exception of six (6) hens (no roosters), up to six (6) ducks and up to six (6) rabbits allowed by right, if in an enclosure that is sited 20 feet from all property lines and not sited in the front yard of any property within the Village Center (VC) District.***

## 2.) Update on zoning violation at 176 Main Street

- LShulda-Merrigan spoke to Jim Hawkins regarding the long standing zoning violation at 176 Main Street. It was reported that Hawkins went to the site, saw 1 Turkey, 1 Goose, 3 chickens and no rooster. Hawkins recommended the complainer should call the Building Inspector when there is a violation so he can go inspect and that “there wasn’t enough to issue a citation”.
- CHayden gave context to the 176 Main Street: The birds are being auctioned so there is a constant flux of birds. He has said that he gets chicks and won’t know whether they will be hens or roosters. The thinking is that he keeps the roosters for too long after they are hatched, when they inevitably become a nuisance.
- CHayden remarked that she had told the neighbor to call the Building Inspector, and that Joe Pellegrino had previously provided Jim Hawkins with recordings of the roosters crowing.
- Report of large shed at 176 Main without required setback or building permit.
- CHayden brought up an additional issue at 176 Main, a complaint of a brand new shed constructed too close to the property line and with no building permit, also reported to the Planning Board by Selectman and Planning Board liaison Bill Harker. CChamp offered to ask neighbor Joe Pellegrino to take a picture of the shed. CHayden thought the two issues should stay separate, as Pellegrino was not the complainant and it may appear retaliatory if he takes the pictures. However, CChamp may ask Pellegrino about it.

## 1.) Town Elections

- The Planning Board briefly discussed the election of the new Planning Board members, who was running and for what term.

Unwell, C.Hayden left the meeting before the brainstorm session.

## 2.) Brainstorm ideas for economic development discussion with Mr. Halvorsen of RKG Consultants.

- Bob Nelson made lists as per RKG’s request of the Charlemont’s “Strengths,” “weaknesses,” “Opportunities” and “Threats”
- Colleen Champ offered to compile a working list of the brainstorm.

Highlights of the discussion are below:

- The Planning Board discussed ways to serve the population that come through Charlemont on the way to Berkshire East during the winter and summer, and the people who come to use the river in the summer. The Board repeatedly brought up that there was no visitor or information center in town. Aesthetics of other towns were brought up. LShulda-Merrigan liked the look of Whitingham. Many Boards members like the look of Stowe, VT.
- GWalker told the other members that behind every pretty town there are stringent zoning laws regulating everything from sign size and height to parking zoning and painting zoning which would be a hard sell in Charlemont. Doing something like flowerpots would be feasible. G.Walker agreed with LShulda-Merrigan’s idea of “adopt a flower pot”
- The Planning Board brainstormed a way to pro-actively communicate with the consultants in order to receive good results.
- CChamp recommended asking them what cities they are researching and that they would want a list of solutions.
- CChamp went on to brainstorm on what would be a value added for the people of Charlemont and what Charlemont could offer; restaurants? Food was emphasized as a major value, as something that could keep people in town for a little longer to enjoy what Charlemont had to offer. BNelson

agreed and also wished there could be a visitor center to tell about the different spots to visit in Charlemont, especially Mohawk State Forest as a great hiking spot.

- CChamp inquired about a Charlemont Business Association, the businesses are known and were surveyed but at this moment there is not a Charlemont Business Association, a Charlemont business can join the Shelburne Business Association. The businesses surveyed for their needs years ago had responded with needing Technical Assistance with web creation and promotion.
- CChamp points out one “threat” of the dam breaking. Another threat is the inherent danger in the recreational activities of the town.
- CChamp suggested as a way to pave the way for 5G to get smart street lamps. There was discussion of the street lamps serving the purpose of being signage as well. Greenfield was discussed regarding the look of the 5G on the telephone poles, noting that they were nice looking.
- Gisela Walker mentioned that “not knowing about 5G” that had been mentioned in the past, was more directed towards not knowing the health repercussions (*as per Jonathan Mirin’s previous engagement with the board regarding 5G.*) The planning Board had been moving towards regulating 5G. C.Champ said it could come under the RKG category of “threat” if everyone had 5G except Charlemont, saying that smart street lamps could be a start. Let’s talk about this at the meeting
- Gisela Walker brought up her concern that the planning board should send a message at Town Meeting that the scenic nature of Charlemont needs to be protected as it is the biggest asset of the town. She continued that people come because it is pretty and that the Town really needs to be careful about what we build. GWalker feels that Charlemont has an advantage over other stretches of route 2 because the signs and buildings do not overpower and distract from the surroundings. She said they should entreat people at the Town Meeting to protect this scenic asset as much as possible.
- The Fairground is brought up, The Grandstand has become dilapidated. The Fairgrounds have a lot of potential but need cleaning and the structures renovated. LShulda-Merrigan added that she would not be opposed to the removal of the Grandstand as it seemed not worth to renovate.
- Gisela Walker noted that the town was understaffed, and could use another staff person to keep up with what’s going on. CChamp told of her offer to The Select Board to look for interns. GWalker worried that the recreation is being over marketed, citing the boom and bust nature of the tourism business. She proposed the idea of having a recreation coordinator. GWalker told of the idea of the town shuttle bus with a driver/speaker who is able to give information and answer questions. Later shuttle busses were discussed again as a vehicle that could drive the circuit and take bikes and tubes and safely transport the visitors from site-to-site to back to their cars.
- Gisela Walker stated that there is no public place for a bathroom, nor is there an “anchor property.” The Charlemont Inn used to fulfill this role. Mentioned talking to Berkshire East to have them promote Charlemont at their info center. GWalker mentioned attempts at a Welcome Center made by Charlotte Dewey many years ago. CChamp suggested the Little Red School house as a potential welcome center/ info center. The others agreed with her, the town owns the Little Red School House, it would just need a bathroom. CChamp mentioned a porta-potty as a solution.
- It was suggested that there could be food trucks at the Little Red school house and food trucks at Native Views (\*formerly called The Big Indian)
- LShulda-Merrigan said she was pleased with how nice the town looks. She pointed out as a person who lives right in town that the traffic is non-stop from 6 AM until 9 PM. She think that more food options would be a huge boost to the community. The lack of sustainable restaurants in town came up with one reason being that they may not have had staffing, or housing, that there weren’t enough people in town to work or live.

## Other Discussions:

### Housing

- Following the discussion of restaurant sustainability, CChamp asked about low income housing and was told by GWalker that Charlemont had less than 10% which leaves Charlemont open to developers to build low income housing without following the town's zoning laws. This could be seen as an opportunity or a threat. Welcoming to employee housing but threat to the aesthetic building aspirations of the town. Air BnB's take up some of the housing stock.

### The River

- BNelson discussed the Planning Board having granted-2 year Special Permits for certain businesses who use the river in order to be able to observe their cooperation with the conditions. After they show they are in compliance, the Planning Board foresees giving them 10 year Special Permits.
- The situation of increased river use and not enough hygiene infrastructure is acknowledged by the board especially notable at Shun Pike. There was discussion about the existence of porta-potties at ShunPike. CHayden believed them to be there during the swim season. CChamp said she did not see them there.
- It is agreed by all that riverside waste is a problem.
- GWalker explained that what happens regarding changes to the river use is slow going because there are so many stakeholders who have an interest in what happens at the river.
- BNelson read the new regulation CMR 323 6.00 (Commercial Uses on Deerfield River). It read that tubers must be no younger than 10 years old to ride in a tube in the Deerfield River.

### Special permitting timeline

- Special permitting was discussed: if a business or individual gets a Special Permit they must start work within 2 years of receiving it. The Board asks Star Atkeson to work on spreadsheet with start and revisit/follow-up dates of Special Permits. It is noted that they need a reminding system.

There being no further agenda items, BNelson moved to close the meeting at 8:05pm

The next meeting will be held May 5<sup>th</sup> 2022

Respectfully submitted by Star Atkeson 4/26/2022

### Documents reviewed in meeting:

Section 32.2 Agriculture Use Table with revisions