

Charlemont Planning Board
March 16th, 2023, 6:00 pm Meeting Minutes
Via conference call and in person, Town Hall

Members Participating: Bob Nelson, Lori Shulda-Merrigan, Andy Mueller

Via Conference Call: Colleen Champ

Others Participating: Star Atkeson (Secretary)

Called to Order by Bob Nelson at 6:05 PM

1. Review/ Approve the Minutes of March 2nd, 2023

Bob Nelson motioned to accept the minutes as written. Lori Shulda-Merrigan seconded the motion. All in favor. The Minutes were initialed.

2. Review Berkshire East extension

- The Board reviewed the Extension.
- The Board discussed the Special Permit writing Process. Some text A. Mueller had put in was taken out last minute before being signed by L. Shulda Merrigan. The Board is not comfortable with the process as it stands, would like to make their vote on a final document, and not before one is drafted, to make sure everyone is on the same page. B. Nelson suggested having an internal due date of one week out, it could be the end of the day on the Friday of the following week and then little tweaks done on the Monday Tuesday and Wednesday of the week it is due.

3. Notify Hyytinen Hollow of Special Permit renewal requirement.
The Board fine-tuned the wording of the letter to be mailed out.

4. Notify Great Outdoors of Special Permit renewal requirement.
This letter will be mailed out by the secretary as soon as possible.

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

1. Housing

- Bob Nelson spoke about an article on Amherst that Colleen sent around and wondered if people are actually clamoring for Tiny Houses or not, and wondered if they should be focused on developing mid-sized houses @1000, 1200 sq ft.
- Bob thought that Tiny Houses on 5 acres, if they were situated close to a neighboring house or lot, could potentially be noisy or unpleasant for the neighbor. So, he is not quite sure where to go with that and is hopeful for some guidance.
- C.Champ told of hoping that multiple homes could share a septic system. She would love to see 3-4 small houses sharing one system on 5 acres. Like a neighborhood association with yards between the houses.
- A.Mueller spoke of cluster developments, in order to preserve open space, housing units are clustered together on 5 acres or 10 acres, in urban or rural settings. It would be a subdivision class— a road comes in and the homes are clustered closer together. That way there is dedicated open space, one dedicated septic system and one dedicated water source, which

may become a public water supply. There is not a bylaw for that. It would be higher density but lower impact if resources can be shared.

- A.Mueller said that people actually do want to do Tiny Homes, and maybe Charlemont could become a destination for that if there was a bylaw in place. Density can increase if people are willing to be in closer proximity.
- L.Shulda Merrigan asked if it would be a subdivision. A.Mueller said, yes with incentive. C.Champ countered that it could be individually owned houses on shared property. Small, cute homes as opposed to a developer building an ugly apartment building.
- B.Nelson spoke of the size, he would want something larger than 500 sq ft. The Board spoke of examples of 800 square feet homes as in North Amherst, co-housing units, 800 sq feet with attached common space, common gardens, common building. They say Charlemont doesn't have a co-housing unit. The Solar Village came up and something on Christian Hill Rd in Colrain. There are 7 homes that share resources, possibly off grid. Also in Greenfield there is "Green River Commons" which cost \$174,000 incentivized.
- B.Nelson wants to set up language that suggests we're open to this somehow or other. LSM asked If it would be a developer selling it or would the community be doing it together.
- B.Nelson thought of the property near his house, 50 acres, you could fit many of these clusters on that, similar to a mobile park but nicer houses and not so packed together. A.Mueller suggests they could be prefabricated homes, and it could be run by residents' associations. A.Mueller says that there is still space in town to build. There are big tracts of land that could be developed, and the build-out structure is in place.
- B.Nelson suggests adding one or two new sections to the bylaws.
- C.Champ wants to know who has been successful with this. A.Mueller suggested checking to see if Amherst has something they can look at, like a template. C.Champ mentioned that Amherst does have an ADU policy that you can rent it out long term if it does not have a kitchen. Wants someone to read through all the accessory uses that are in the article, to see if there is something about renting out longer term. They want to check Greenfield's bylaws and other progressive town's bylaws.
- A new cooperative housing bylaw would solve for affordable housing and elderly housing.
- Bob brought up that tiny Homes densely packed on 5 acres could be disruptive to neighbors.
- A.Mueller spoke of a Design Review Board which could work with the Planning Board. Andy suggests having this capability "in-house" but wonder how much authority could be granted to the Planning Board to do that— whether they would have the right. Certain things would be under their jurisdiction, they could do a site plan review. LSM suggests they keep researching. B.Nelson and LSM will research online. They will look to create a cooperative housing section in the bylaws. B. Nelson said that once they have something that feels good, they can get Peggy in. LSM suggested starting with Greenfield. C.Champ mentioned that FRCOG has a small-town housing group, and that she will contact them to see what is working and what is not working.
- C.Champ really wants the Board to go visit some successful cooperative housing developments, wants to send out links and two people at a time can go.

2. Master Plan

- Of the Housing section in Master Plan, B.Nelson said it includes seeking ways to improve elderly housing and low income housing. LSM would love to see elderly housing in Charlemont, if you lived in Charlemont, you would want to stay here.
- A.Mueller wondered what the timeline is for updating the master plan, 2-5 years? LSM suggested updating piece by piece. Bob Nelson said it is a long process, he was impressed by how well written it is. It needs the RKG updates. If we have open meetings, if we know the

agenda is light, we could between one meeting to the next, create updates to discuss at the next meeting.

- Inputting the updated RKG housing numbers in the housing section for our next meeting on April 6th would be a great start.
- A.Mueller wants to set up a Master Plan/Master File. While they cannot actively edit a document together out of open meeting, they could gather resources and links and rough drafts altogether in a Master File.

Agenda next meeting

- Approve Minutes,
- Master Plan updates
- Tiny House/midsize housing
- Heritage Diner Special Permit amendment.
- The Town Meeting bylaw vote, next steps
- Review Zoning bylaw revisions.

B.Nelson motioned to adjourn at 8:05, All in Favor.

NEXT MEETING April 6th, 2023

Respectfully Submitted by Star Atkeson 03/30/2023

Documents reviewed in meeting:

Agenda for 03/16/2023 Meeting

Meeting Minutes of 03/02/2023

Berkshire East Special Permit Extension