

Present: Patty Chaffee; Bill Rescsanski; Keith Weed; Gabe Bailey; Alissa Bascom; Richard Carter; Alan Putnam

Alternates: Lenny Ostasiewski

Absent: Rosie Smith-Hull

Staff: Liz Emerson

Members of the Public: Bonnie Remick; Meagan Hurley; Jarrod Fillou; John Tuthill; Katie Lajoie

Patty Chaffee called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Approval of minutes of 12/06/2022:

Motion by Mr. Bailey to accept the December 06, 2022 minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Rescsanski. 7-0-0, motion approved.

Agenda Review: none

Applications:

- 1) **2022-SPFP-006: Fillion Properties LLC (Owner) Meagan Hurley (Agent)** request final site plan review for a new building for diesel engine vehicle & equipment repair; the property identified as Map 203 Lot 001 and is located at 3791 Claremont Road in the Zone E – Mixed Use Zoning District.

Ms. Chaffee explained that this is a minor site plan application for Fillion Properties at 3791 Claremont Road.

It was explained that the proposal is for a new 30'x40' building for cold storage. There will be no septic or heat in the building. The previously building which was removed was approximately 25'x30'. The proposal is to put the new building in the exact location, but slightly turned for access.

In response to a question from Ms. Bascom, it was explained that their proposal includes a single, 12'x14' garage door for small equipment.

Motion by Mr. Bailey to accept the application as complete, seconded by Ms. Bascom. 7-0-0; motion approved.

Motion by Mr. Bailey to accept the application as final, seconded by Mr. Putnam.

Discussion:

Ms. Bascom asked about parking spaces not delineated on the plan. It was noted that there are some spaces planned against the building, along the roadside. The space along the backside will be paved next year.

Ms. Chaffee asked about DES best management practices for storage of the proposed sealcoat tank. It was noted that there is a 20'x20' concrete pad for the 6,000-gallon tanks.

In response to a question from Ms. Bascom, it was noted that there will be a waste disposal facility, including screening at the back of the property. Ms. Bascom asked that this also be a condition.

AMENDED Motion by Mr. Bailey to accept the application as final, pending delineation of this parking spaces, and waste disposal facility, and a tank inspection by the Building Inspector or Fire Chief, seconded by Mr. Putnam.
7-0-0; motion approved.

2) Sign Permit Application for North American Infrared (3791 Claremont Rd)
Motion by Ms. Bascom to accept the sign permit application, with the caveat that if indeed it is lit up in the future, the applicant will come back to the Board for approval, seconded by Mr. Putnam.
7-0-0; motion approved.

Continued Business: None

New Business:

a) Public Hearing for 2023 Amendments

Ms. Chaffee opened the public hearing of the Planning Board to review the 2023 amendments for the warrant.

#1: Are you in favor of the adoption of the zoning ordinance amendment to the existing Town of Charlestown Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board to amend Section 8.4 General Provisions to prohibit new manufactured housing parks in Charlestown?

Ms. Chaffee noted that the Board has previously approved this. She explained that this change would mean that no new manufactured housing parks could be created in Charlestown. This recommendation came from the Master Plan Housing Chapter. It is believed that manufactured housing parks do not meet the break-even analysis and pay the fair share of taxes. Also, the Town already has ten mobile home parks, which is more than any other town in the area.

Motion by Ms. Bascom to approve amendment #1 to be placed on the 2023 Warrant, as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of the Zoning Ordinance amendment to the existing Town of Charlestown Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board: Amend Section 8.4 General Provisions to prohibit new manufactured housing parks in Charlestown? The Planning Board recommends approval of this article. Seconded by Mr. Bailey.
7-0-0; motion approved.

#2: Are you in favor of the adoption of the zoning ordinance amendment to the existing Town of Charlestown Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board to clarify that multifamily housing is allowed in Zone E and will be allowed by special exception in Zone D?

Ms. Chaffee noted that the Planning Board recommends approval of this amendment. This change would reword Zone E regulations to clearly state that multifamily structures, housing three or more families, are allowed. This change would also make it so multifamily structures would be allowed in Zone D by special exception, which would be applied for through the Zoning Board. If the Zoning Board approves a project, it would then go before the Planning Board.

A resident read a statement from Sharon Francis, who could not make it to the meeting. Please withdraw support from the proposed article #2, currently recommended for voter approval at our 2023 Town Meeting. Reasons to eliminate this change to the Charlestown Zoning Ordinance are twofold; one,

the Charlestown Zoning Ordinance already has six other zones that provide for multifamily housing and there are multiple opportunities for traditional multifamily housing opportunities in Charlestown in the existing zones. If new multifamily housing is proposed there should be an economic study completed; two, existing housing is a better economic asset than the proposed change. The current zoning safeguards Little Sugar River and its tributaries. Please withdraw support for the ill-conceived Article #2.

Mr. Rescsanski stated that he agrees with everything stated by Ms. Francis and will be voting against this item.

Ms. Chaffee stated that Mr. Lincourt, who was on the Land Use Committee for the Master Plan, previously stated to the Board that this proposal does fall in line with the Master Plan. Mr. Rescsanski stated that the Master Plan has many different objectives that conflict with each other. This will not improve the tax rate; it could make it worse. The Master Plan does not prioritize anything. Ms. Chaffee stated that the Implementation Chapter does prioritize the top items from each committee.

Mr. Rescsanski stated that the Master Plan states that it wants to protect wildlife and improve the tax rate, but these items are not prioritized. Ms. Chaffee explained that the Board had a previous conversation with Mr. Holmes regarding the Conservation Chapter reference to a habitat corridor, which is a small sliver in Zone D. There was discussion regarding an overlay to the Zone, which could be addressed after this item is brought to the ballot. She stated that the Town has to find a compromise, as there is valuable space in Zone D that can be developed to some degree, while still keeping that corridor.

Ms. Bascom noted that this proposal still maintains the five-acre requirement, which should limit the amount of infill. It is clear that Zone D is a watershed for the North Charlestown well, which will be discontinued.

Mr. Rescsanski asked what the long-term benefit to Charlestown is for having multifamily homes in these areas. The Town already has its fair share.

Mr. Bailey stated that he sympathizes with Mr. Rescsanski's feelings. However, he also feels that Charlestown has been stuck in a rut for a long time. The creation of a new Master Plan was intended to move Charlestown forward. He noted that he serves on the Conservation Commission, which continues to find parcels of land and purchase them to protect them as funds are available. Mr. Rescsanski stated that he believes this will put Charlestown in that rut again. He likes Charlestown because it has families for homeowners and neighbors. He would not want an apartment next to him or out in the woods. This does not benefit the Town. The Town already has its fair share of apartments and mobile homes.

Ms. Chaffee stated that the Town does not have its fair share of apartments, as there is a housing shortage in Charlestown. Young people cannot find apartments. Mr. Rescsanski stated that there is a housing shortage across the State. Ms. Chaffee stated that she believes this proposal may help attract young professionals to Town. She noted that incoming residents will have vehicles, which creates more motor vehicle tax as a Town revenue.

Mr. Carter asked why another area needs to be opened for multifamily housing if there are already six other zones where this is allowed. Ms. Chaffee explained that Mr. Lincourt stated that Zone D has the most available land for building. Mr. Carter asked if it would make sense to change the zoning to repurpose some of the existing zones. Mr. Rescsanski stated that this would allow for apartments to be

placed in a zone that has water and sewer, and next to a road which might not create as much traffic. Zone D could be restricted to allow for multifamily housing in a limited area where to be valuable to put it.

Ms. Bascom noted that this would still have to go to the Zoning Board, as it is only being allowed by special exception. Applications for multifamily housing would still need to meet the Town's criteria for important items. There are a lot of checks and balances in the process. She stated that she remembers hearing a past application for senior or veteran housing which would have added to the value of the Town. Allowing multifamily housing in this zone might offer that opportunity to pique someone's interest in investing in the Town.

Mr. Rescsanski stated that the analysis did not find that one apartment has a higher average value than a single-family home. Building six homes versus six apartments will likely add more value to the Town. Ms. Bascom stated that she believes the majority of the population no longer want to maintain a home. She does not believe that investors are looking to bring in Section 8 housing. These would likely be beautiful studio, one, possibly two-bedroom apartments.

Ms. Emerson stated that, currently investors could apply for a variance through the Zoning Board to allow for multifamily housing. This is being proposed because a variance has five questions, where a special exception has three questions. Ms. Bascom stated that she believes it will also help to market the Town and will make a change that investors will notice.

Bonnie Remick stated that this proposal will also attract younger people into Town, which will encourage more children in the schools. A large home will attract an older population that likely would not add school age children.

Mr. Carter stated that studio apartments and beautiful landscaping are things that the Town wants. However, blocks of apartments or Section 8 housing is not wanted by the Town. If this pass, the Zoning Board and Planning Board will have to review applications to make sure the right things are approved in Town. Ms. Bascom stated that every town is obligated to provide a certain percentage of workforce housing, Section 8 housing, etc. Charlestown has met the capacity for this, and there is no one who can force the Town to include more workforce housing.

Ms. Chaffee stated that there is no one currently looking to invest in that area to build 3,000 s.f. homes for seniors. Changes need to be made to see if investors would bring in other types of housing. Multifamily can mean multigenerational living.

Ms. Bascom stated that adding higher quality, even multifamily, homes does work towards the end goal of lowering the tax rate. People will come into the Town and open businesses which does eventually reduce the tax rate.

Mr. Rescsanski stated that he is also considering the community. Single-family houses attract families who care about the tax rate versus an investor. Families also participate and volunteer for the Town. Ms. Bascom stated that there is no guarantee that investors will be massive conglomerates.

Mr. Rescsanski asked if there is something else that deserves to be on the warrant more than this proposed article.

Ms. Bascom stated that, the idea is to increase the attractiveness of the Town and to provide living space for, for example the three principals and the Superintendent that will be hired by the school district this year. Ms. Remick stated that those positions will likely not want to live in apartments. Ms. Bascom explained that there are plenty of houses and building lots available. Multifamily housing could also be useful for one of the four teaching positions in Charlestown that are open.

Ms. Remick stated that Charlestown needs to decide who it wants to cater to. It can cater to transients and tenants or homeowners who will have pride in their property. Ms. Chaffee stated that not all multifamily tenants can be lumped together as transients. The Town also needs to grow its community by attracting younger people. Younger people will help to keep the Town vibrant and alive. Everyone who lives in Town is appreciated, but seniors do not come out to volunteer or work at a Rec facility. Attractive, professional housing could be used to grow the community. Ms. Bascom noted that multifamily housing in Zone D will need to be vetted and approved by two boards.

Motion by Ms. Bascom to approve amendment #2 to be placed on the 2023 warrant as follows: Are you in favor of the adoption of the Zoning Ordinance amendments to the existing Town of Charlestown Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board to clarify that multifamily housing is allowed in Zone E and will be allowed by special exception in Zone D? The Planning Board recommends approval of this amendment. Seconded by Ms. Chaffee.

4-3-0; motion approved.

#3: Shall the Town adopt the provisions of NH Hampshire RSA 79E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentives?

Ms. Chaffee stated that this proposal will create the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive RSA 79E Program, allowing citizens to apply through the Select Board to provide a temporary period of limited tax relief for property owners who wish to undertake substantial rehabilitation of a qualifying structure which will provide at least one public benefit. Under the statute, use of the 79E program is limited to designated or recognized downtowns, town centers, or village centers. The Board has a map which includes a large rectangle around the center of Town, as well as a large triangle in the village of North Charlestown. There are other ways to possibly access this program, such as if a home is more than 40 years.

In response to a question, Ms. Emerson explained that examples of public benefits include fixing up a rundown house, creation of a park or green space, or something to increase the economic base of the Town. 79E does not define exactly what a public benefit is, so this is left up to the Select Board. There is a requirement that \$75,000 or 15% of the value of the house must be spent on the project, and it must be a qualifying structure, such as a historic structure or at least 40 years old. This only produces the tax relief for a certain amount of years, as determined by the Select Board.

Mr. Rescsanski stated that he is uncomfortable with the ambiguity of the public benefit.

In response to a question from Ms. Bascom, Ms. Emerson stated that the Select Board can make the guidelines more guidelines more restrictive than the State law.

Mr. Carter stated that he believes only a small percentage of Charlestown will be affected by this proposal. He is unclear if it is worthwhile to place this on the warrant at this time.

It was noted that, in the long term, this proposal will likely make properties more valuable and thus be a benefit to taxes overall.

Ms. Bascom agreed that there may not be a necessity for this third warrant article this year. Ms. Chaffee stated that the necessity for this came out of the Master Plan. This was something discussed at length by the Board.

Ms. Remick stated that there is a great example of this in Claremont. That project has beautified and upgraded the whole street and neighborhood. This will also increase the Town's tax base.

Ms. Chaffee noted that this could also allow for existing buildings in Town to be converted into multifamily housing. Mr. Rescsanski stated that he does not believe this will add much more tax revenue to the Town.

Ms. Chaffee stated that her argument is that, if someone has \$75,000 to put into a home to fix it up they likely also have the extra \$500 for the tax bill. Ms. Bascom stated that this might convince somebody to purchase in Town and invest. Mr. Carter noted that, if this item passes and no one applies for it, it will not impact the tax rate.

Motion by Ms. Bascom to approve amendment #3 to be placed on the 2023 warrant as follows: Shall the Town adopt the provisions of New Hampshire RSA 79E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentives? Seconded by Mr. Putnam.

6-1-0; motion approved.

Ms. Chaffee closed the public hearing for the 2023 amendments.

Administration:

Ms. Emerson stated that she has sent a letter to Allard's Portable Toilets for a site plan application, as chemical toilets are being stored at 98 Hammond Road. A letter was also sent to Wheeler Rand. If the wood there is being purchased and resold, this will require a site plan approval. JS Auto will need a site plan approval for change of use of a building being used for car detailing. A letter was also sent to a gentleman for mobile home storage on a couple of lots which was not previously approved.

Ms. Chaffee noted that the Board will next tentatively meet on January 3, 2023.

Communications: *None at this time*

a) Board – Master Plan Discussion

b) Public Participation:

Motion by Ms. Bascom to adjourn at 8:11pm, seconded by Mr. Bailey.
7-0-0; motion approved. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristan Patenaude
Recording Secretary