

Present: Terry Spilsbury - Chair; Sharon Francis; Gabe Bailey; Alan Putnam.

Absent: Dick Lincourt; Doug Neill;

Alternates: Rosie Smith-Hull;

Public: Scott Wade; Charlie Baraly; Peter Plunkett; Brett White; Roger Thibodeau; Jeremy Wood; Tamara Golden; Alissa Bascom; Bill Rescsanski

Zoom: Jeff Lessels - Ex Officio; Shelly Andrus; Patrick Adrian; Joel Stoddard

Employees Present: Liz Emerson; Sarah Davis – Secretary

Terry Spilsbury called the meeting to order at 7pm and asked for any persons on Zoom to identify themselves he then read through the agenda for the meeting.

There were no applications on the agenda.

Minutes of the meeting of October 6th: amendments: Terry Spilsbury: p.1, para 10, line 3 insert “in the 1960s through the 80s” after “growth” and change “experiences” to “pressures and challenges”; p.2, para.5, line 1 insert “Joe Cobb and Jeremy Wood expressed” before “the”; p.2, para. 6, line 1 add “will schedule a meeting to settle on an appropriate methodology” after “Phil Turner”; p.2, para.10 change “communications” to “recommendations”.

Commented to be added from Sharon Francis at the end of paragraph 9 on page 2: “a criteria for a site plan review in our regulation is that there be a “change of use”.

Motion by Rosie Smith-Hull: to accept the minutes with corrections, seconded by Alan Putnam, all in favor, motion approved.

Terry Spilsbury asked for any discussion before beginning the Community Facilities Chapter presentation, seeing none he asked Scott Wade to make his presentation.

Scott Wade presented the Community Facilities chapter.

Questions: Terry Spilsbury asked about the most likely viable solution for the lack of space in the Charlestown Municipal Offices/Government building. Scott Wade responded that there are similar issues with a number of buildings in the town and there would need to be a solution endorsed by the Select Board.

Gabe Bailey asked about the purchase of the Municipal Office building being recent. It was agreed that this building was too small at the time it was purchased.

Terry Spilsbury commented on the marketability of buildings to fund future development/purchase.

Sharon Francis asked about how far each of the Task Forces needs to take their content in order for the Planning Board and the town to move forward with recommendations. Scott Wade responded that the 2007 Master Plan recommended a centralized building for the Municipal Offices: this recommendation was followed but with too small a building.

Terry Spilsbury asked Charlie Baraly if the issues with the Fire Station building have changed over the last year: Charlie confirmed that there has been no change in the condition of the building.

Terry Spilsbury asked about the 2019 discussion of the building needs proposal to develop the entryway to the library. Scott Wade confirmed that this is not a pressing issue at this point.

Gabe Bailey asked who developed the improvement plan for the library that is currently in the works. Liz Emerson confirmed that Judy Baraly handled the LCHIP grant application. The details were managed by the Library Board of Trustees and the Select Board.

Scott Wade asked about the Food Shelf being included in the Master Plan, it was agreed that this should be included in this chapter, Community Facilities. Liz Emerson stated it was said that if the Water and Sewer Department could have their own building then the Food Shelf could take over the current Water and Sewer building which has handicapped access. It was agreed that this warrants further investigation.

Terry Spilsbury suggested talking broadly about a Capital Improvements Plan and what people would like to see included.

A discussion ensued on the depth into which the Community Facilities Task Force needs to go and if the Building Needs Committee data should be incorporated. Terry Spilsbury summarized that it is always difficult for small towns to finance large projects and build a case to convince the voters which results in repeated "band aid" projects. He further went on to speak about possible development of municipal buildings between the dry bridge and the Springfield Road utilizing the available land around the DOT building. It was agreed that community input is vital to ensure that any project is in synch with the community's wishes.

Sharon Francis commented that Charlestown is a poor town and that the residents should have the details of repair costs versus a big budget solution. Brett White asked about cuts to fund the CIP.

Jeremy Wood, Phil Turner, Roger Thibodeau and Brett White spoke about the town of Charlestown being land/property rich and selling some to generate taxable property whilst balancing the required services. Further comment was made on the CIP being in place assisting with grant funding.

Terry Spilsbury spoke about the 2021 ballot having the water bond and therefore not being an option for a Facilities item. This is something for future years but it is feasible to begin in depth research into facilities development proposals. Scott Wade responded that the only known cost is for the Fire Department and this would be a considerable undertaking. Terry Spilsbury spoke about a long term plan possibly going into the 2030s.

Gabe Bailey asked about specific buildings being put up for sale. It was confirmed that the only building identified was the current town office building. Gabe Bailey commented that this property was vacant for a significant amount of time before it was purchased by the town.

Discussion moved to the Fire Station and the difference between the cost of repair and replacement, specifically the cost of items required to shore up the building and provide specific required services for the Fire Department.

Sharon Francis suggested that serious research should be done on available funding such as grants for future projects.

Terry Spilsbury thanked Scott Wade for his presentation and asked Phil Turner to continue the discussion on the Economic Development chapter.

Questions: Terry Spilsbury asked about a location for a Municipal parking lot in town. Phil Turner suggested the water department facility with its easy access to the town center, possibly a multi-story facility. A further possibility is Summer Street at the location of the more dilapidated properties. Jeremy Wood spoke about the Fire Station property should this move.

Phil Turner spoke about taking current buildings and building up to maximize use of space with a mixed use of business on the first floor with residential property upon the upper floors. Liz Emerson spoke about multi use buildings being the best to increase taxes per acre and are used in “strong” towns.

Terry Spilsbury asked about the Economic Development Task Force’s views on the Beautification Coalitions recommendations. Jeremy Wood responded that they appear good for the most part although there are concerns as regards drainage given some of the proposed changes.

Gabe Bailey asked why the drive for more parking as there is currently no need for additional parking in town. A discussion ensued on possibly having metered parking and municipal parking alleviating the need for individual business parking.

Liz Emerson spoke about tax credits for low income housing and having mixed developments with ratios of low income housing within the development. A discussion ensued on the town purchasing lots within mobile home parks to reduce the number of low assessed mobile homes without eliminating this type of housing completely.

Sharon Francis suggested changes and greater explanations on the strategic objectives.

Terry Spilsbury asked about the upgrading of roads to class 5 and suggested that this should be rethought as there is little value in this avenue outside of a proposed development.

A discussion was had on what the “Planning Board” needs to address in meetings versus what can be handled by the Planning and Zoning Administrator such as signs. Terry Spilsbury asked the Economic Development Task Force to articulate parameters that they would clarify and streamline the regulations. Sharon Francis commented on their being a public record for all Planning Board meetings.

A discussion ensued on new businesses in town, specifically a new pharmacy that was mentioned as a want in response to the Economic Development Task force’s Facebook post. The discussion developed to include how to attract larger new business and the infrastructure required for the employees such as schools and housing.

It was suggested that CEDA should be invited to attend a Planning Board meeting for a joint discussion on business development in Charlestown: the Economic Development Task Force will contact CEDA.

Terry Spilsbury spoke about the next Planning Board meeting on November 3rd which is Election Day. The Board decided to cancel it. It was decided that the next Planning Board meeting will be on November 17th when the Energy, Utilities and Public Services Task Force will present.

Liz Emerson presented details on the current cases which she is handling.

There are 14 open code enforcement cases classified as “violations” and 6 open Health Officer cases. All have received notices. A third of the citizens have responded which has resulted in a handful of closed

cases. The current Select Board is supportive of legal action to enforce notices where no improvements have been seen. Liz Emerson detailed the process which is followed from initial notices to eventual legal action.

Terry Spilsbury spoke about the budget for legal expenses not having been expended in recent years and the funds being available to support action.

Terry Spilsbury asked about development on 32 Hastings Court. Liz Emerson confirmed that she will double check the building permit for the size of the addition which will be a utility room. The owner is currently experiencing health issues. An invitation to attend a Planning Board meeting will be extended.

Sharon Francis spoke about the legal responsibilities with regards to the property and the Planning Board regulations and read out specific parts of the regulations. She further went on to talk about potential consequences of the developments and concerns being expressed by neighbors and the need for the Planning Board to discuss the potential future use. Liz Emerson spoke about the property being a hangout spot but everything at this point is still rumor. There are no current activities taking place on the property that are in the purview of the Planning Board.

Terry Spilsbury read out the specific wording of the regulations and confirmed that at this time the property does not have anything that falls under the Planning Board's jurisdiction. Should this situation change then it will be addressed. Joel Stoddard spoke about potential for negative development based on the Project Manager's record and reputation. Liz Emerson stated it is neither hers nor the Planning Board's place to judge an individual's character. Terry Spilsbury confirmed that the situation is being monitored. Further discussion ensued on the regulations.

Rosie Smith-Hull asked about Duane Wetherby's resignation and made a motion to nominate Jeremy Wood as an alternate, seconded by Sharon Francis, all in favor, motion approved. Jeremy Wood confirmed that he accepts the position. Liz Emerson will pass the information on to the Select Board.

Motion to adjourn by Gabe Bailey seconded by Rosie Smith-Hull, all in favor meeting adjourned at 9.30

Sarah Davis
Secretary