

## **Woodstock Planning Board Meeting Minutes**

Date: July 11, 2022 Time: 6:00 PM

Woodstock Town Office Building, Lost River Road

### **6:00 PM – Call to Order**

Roll Call Attendance Bonnie, Scott, Robert, Margaret, Diane (18:08), Mike (Zoom)

Approval of Minutes- June 20, 2022 Approved – Margaret, Bonnie, Mike.

Selectmen's Report – Scott.

Nothing to report: Tomorrow is the first of the new meeting schedule.

### **Correspondence Received by the Planning Board**

- Economic development committee – Town of Thornton  
We will respectfully decline from direct involvement but are willing to answer any questions they may have about our process.

### **Status of Resnick Paving –**

Union bank was requested to return 18000, instead they released the hold on the full amount. Mark determined that the best course forward was to move forward with installation of the shrubs, which he has agreed to do with the funds released to him.

### **6:15 PM – Discussion on Land Use Regulations**

Every so many years, it is important to review the Land Use Regulations we have to consider whether they cover everything we need and to see whether the public feels we could benefit from any others. We are members of North Country Council and they could help us. The attorney could help us. We can bring forward a draft and it could be voted on at Town Meeting. We are open to opinions and suggestions from the public and would like to hear what you have to say so we are moving forward in a direction that serves the public.

Jackie Wilson – I served on the Conservation Commission many years ago. I am no expert. I'm thinking about Zoning. I've watched the whole battle that Bethlehem has had with Cassela Waste and I'm concerned about the potential for Woodstock becoming a town where it would be proposed to put a landfill. If we don't have any zoning in place, we wouldn't have any opportunity to decline. I'm also thinking about what used to be the Union Bank is now privately owned, and I apologize if this applies to anyone in this room, but it looks really bad for Main street to have all those cinder blocks out there. So I'm thinking of how we can protect

Pat Griffin – I moved up here and I'm trying to emulate the place I moved to, not where I came from. We're one of the few towns that don't have zoning. We don't have much land that's still available for sale. The only large parcel I know of is up on Avery farm Rd. and that's all ledge.

Jackie – but current land owners can sell their land. My point is that we think – I raised my kids here, I'm confident in the health of our environment, but without protections in place, that can change and we have no consent over it.

Robert – and the consent issue can go the other way as well. There are places where people aren't allowed to park their own cars in their own driveways.

Igor Bily – I have over 30 years in real estate and development. It's not about selling the land, it's about someone owning a piece of land and if there is no regulation, the person can do ANYTHING he wants with that land and there is nothing to stop him. Case in point is the self storage going in across the street. A little bit of zoning would probably have stopped that. I came from a socialist country and believe me I understand overregulating. At the same time, I appreciate the protection that some zoning could offer.

Pat – this town has voted several times against zoning. I came up here and I didn't want to bring Boston with me. It can be hard to find that fine line between a little regulation and overregulating.

Robert – we don't have a right to tell other people what to do with their land. They worked hard for it.

Jackie – I'm not trying to go back and change what is already in existence. I'm suggesting protections against what **could** happen in the future.

Donna Wyatt – I'll be on my best behavior! On the Select meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup>, they said that the government thinks we should have more businesses in town. I'm wondering where they think we're going to put them. And are we going to lose our National Forests? I think this came from AHEAD, and I think they may not be using "a head". Talking with a neighbor, she calls it Rte 112 raceway, and says if we get more traffic we'll have to move because it won't be workable. I live near Russel Farm Rd and I came here tonight to learn something. I'm fortunate enough not to have to study the constitution. I'm wondering how the government can say we have to pay part of a neighbor's taxes (the AHEAD project).

Bonnie – do we know whether the AHEAD project is going forward?

Scott – it probably will go forward. There are so many opinions about who will be living there. I have employees who live in one in Littleton. We accepted the bond which is a pass-through, but that is really the only direct involvement we have. There will be a tax valuation on the property based on what the State assessment is that we are given.

Patrick – the difference between this project and Ray Burton Common is that this project could house school children and that will change the possible cost of education in our town.

Rex – I don't think this should be decided by the Select Board only. I think it should be voted on by the town as a whole.

Scott – I think this is a problem with all of these issues. Everyone in the town wants what they want, and there is little agreement.

Bonnie – one of the benefits is that you have a public hearing and you gather opinions on the topic. Unfortunately, to have site plan review, which is a valuable tool, you have to have Zoning, even if it's just one zone. With site plan review, you have the opportunity to have some input into these development projects bigger than just the Select Board had to be able to open it up to a bigger discussion. It can be a temporary thing – there is such a thing as “Emergency Zoning”. It can be pretty broad, but with a few little rules, and with the opportunity to see on paper and at least ask the questions to see the impact on schools, sewer, water, and so on. Right now, we have no say on even large projects like the AHEAD project. We would have to have a significant reason not to grant a permit.

Casey – we're always in here for the pit, which we've had for years, and this thing just blows through???

Bonnie -correct, because Earth Excavation is heavily regulated, and this project is not a subdivision so we do not have jurisdiction over it. It is not fair, I agree 100%. It covers the same type of need, but they are regulated differently. Subdivision is the division of one plot of land into separate conveyances. I'll be the first one to say that AHEAD's implementation not also being considered a subdivision doesn't make sense, but it isn't.

There has been a rumor ...

We are growing, and there are reasons why the zoning ordinance hasn't made it several times.

Robert – don't think zoning and permitting saves the world. It creates problems and complicates everything, while taking away your freedom.

Bonnie – do we want to have more tools to face what is coming up ahead of us, or not?

Scott – I think what we're talking about is worrying about what your neighbors are going to do, how they will use their land or sell it.

Robert – a landfill could pay every tax dollar in the town

Pat – my buddy moved out of Bethlehem because Casella was moving out and they paid every tax dollar in the town.

- What land use regulations do we have now? Shoreland Protection. Floodplain. Setback & height ordinances. Limitations on livestock. Easier to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission – and somewhere we need to change that. I'm not necessarily advocating for zoning, but I'm saying be aware of what we have, accept it and enforce it.

Bonnie – as the Planning Board, we are not doing our jobs if we do not periodically consider this topic and look into it to see what makes sense for us. As elected officials, we should not just do nothing.

Robert - We have the authority to make the rules, and we also have the authority to agree to variances, which the public has the right to request. We need to be careful not to overregulate where there is no need. People should have the right to make their own mistakes and learn from them.

Bonnie – does anyone who hasn't spoken have anything to add?

Jackie – when I think about freedom and being told what I can and can't do, and when I think about the residences that have been bought in Lincoln for Air B&B, as a teacher, I see how many of my students are suffering because their parents cannot afford a place to live because the land is all being used for tourism. So just say, our tourism industry expands to the point where ordinary citizens can't afford to live here any more and the people who would work in the tourism industry can't afford to be here. The industry collapses. Who are we helping by having no support for these families?

Pat – everyone gets a trophy now just for trying, so they all feel entitled

Diane – people work hard, they should be able to benefit from working hard. Taxes are high because of the school system

Jackie – our cost per pupil is right in line with any other school system our size. I am grateful for what I have here and for the opportunities I have.

Scott – let's reign this back in. We're not having a school board discussion.

Thank you for your input.

Other Business

## **Public Participation**

Rex asked about the letter he was sent about his excavation pit not notifying abutters. He asked for a written notification from the Board about the implied conditions of approval. Bonnie stated that it is included in the minutes and continued that the attorney has confirmed that statements and agreements made during the permit hearing are considered part of the conditions of approval. Casey stated that he has a list of people who he personally notified and that he also has the call log of who has been notified of the blasting on the two days when it occurred. He stated that Kevin Foley is not an abutter and that they are not allowed to talk with John Kimball because of the lawsuit, so the question is how are they supposed to notify him?

The attorney said that if there is a public hearing and that in the context of a public hearing a person agrees to do something, the person is then bound to do that thing. In this case, continuing to notify those abutters who can be notified in person is appropriate, and for those who cannot be reached, sending a note stating that blasting will occur within a limited period (e.g. the week ahead), then that would cover the requirement.

Christina Payne, owner of Inn 32 on Main St is interested in serving on the Planning Board. She is here in the audience observing tonight's meeting. The Board requested a letter of interest to be returned to the Town office before next meeting and we will vote at that time.

Scott asked whether Judy has received the original Lot Merger documentation to file with the State. Bonnie confirmed that this has been done.

Question: the distinction between a forum and a hearing? This is an open discussion and there is not a vote being taken. We sincerely want input before we put a lot of work into it. If it seems that there is some interest, it is our job to take the next steps forward. Any warrant article would have to be brought before the Select Board before being put to a vote. There is, of course, still a lot more work to be done before we would get to that point.

Bonnie – straw poll. How many in the room feel that it would be worth looking at zoning? There were no responses.

Igor – everyone has their own interest. It's very difficult to discuss this in general terms because it is personal to each of us.

Meeting adjourned 7:16