

Town of Winchester
Planning Board
Minutes
9-17-18

Meeting opened: 7:00pm.

Members present: Mike Doherty (Chair), Kim Carl, Suzanne Boisvert, Herb Stephens and Jordan Sharra. Gus Ruth and Christy Davis were absent. Margaret Sharra is the Land Use Administrator.
Public: Mr. & Mrs. Waldschmidt.

First order of business: The board reviews the minutes of 8-6-18 for approval. **J. Sharra moves to approve, H. Stephens seconds. The vote is 5 yes.**

Second order of business: The Waldschmidts are here to consult with the board about a possible subdivision. They own property on Old Spofford Road. The LUA lays out the existing plan of the area. She reads a letter from Mr. Waldschmidt explaining the history of the "Putnam" property and what he proposes. He is very well aware of the narrow, sharp corner on this road going up the hill. He is offering some of that land to the town, so the town can correct the problems in that area for all users of the road.

The LUA reads PB minutes to the board from 2005 when a subdivision was done just below the sharp corner. The board at that time expressed their concerns that further subdivision above the corner is not a good idea and that it can be deemed "scattered and premature". This corner is only one lane, has poor visibility and poor drainage. When that subdivision was approved, part of the motion was for no further subdivisions. It was discussed that no more subdivision would be granted until a plan of upgrades are submitted. The LUA asks the members to look in their subdivision regulations about "scattered and premature". She explains that PB's have the right to deny subdivisions if the area is not up to standard. There was a discussion on school buses. They are not going onto Old Spofford Road. The Waldschmidts are offering a couple acres of land to the town so they can make improvements to the road. Dale Gray, Highway Superintendent, was supposed to be here tonight. He is in favor of acquiring this land to improve the road over the next few years. This area has been a big problem for years and Dale would like to get it fixed. It is explained that across the state, it is common for a developer to make off site improvements or to work with a municipality such as transferring land for improvements when doing a project. There is a process to acquiring the land. It is dependent upon the Highway Superintendents support, the PB recommendation and the approval of the BOS after a public hearing. The PB is being asked tonight if they see any concerns with this proposed subdivision excepting the narrow road area. Members ask if this is what Dale wants and if this is a good improvement. H. Stephens explains this would be very good for the town to be able to improve the road. Right now it is dangerous and trucks have gone off the road. For the town to obtain this property it would then get the town time (years) to work on it. The work would be costly so to spread the cost over years would be beneficial. The LUA informs the board that she and Dale went up there recently and noted the lower end of the curve is very steep and would be a big job removing the material, whereas the upper area is relatively flat. Mr. Waldschmidt has also offered for the town to dump the excavated material on his land just below the curve. That would cut down significantly trucking costs. Could the PB hold off on the subdivision until the work is done? The LUA suggests a condition of subdivision could be holding off on building permits until a certain amount of work is done. Presently there are 3 properties above the curve that are being developed. These are existing lots. She guesses there may be presently an additional 10 lots that could be built upon now. Building will continue up there because it is such a beautiful area but in order to

upgrade the road it is important for the town to obtain this property. The Waldschmidts will work with Dick Drew for subdivision and Dick has offered to meet with Dale this fall to preview the corner. Members look to see if there is enough area for 3 driveway cuts. Mr. Waldschmidt believes there is. Dale would verify. He is asking for lot 22-5 of 12.67 acres be subdivide into 3 lots of approx. 2 new lots of 2 acre each and the remainder of the lot would be about 8+ acres.

It is suggested for Dale, Herb, Mike and Margaret to meet with the BOS in the next week or two to make sure they are willing to acquire this land and make improvements on this road.


All members of the PB are in support of the town obtaining this property and improving that are of Old Spofford Road. The board also does not see any other concerns with the proposed subdivision at this time. The LUA will get back to the Waldschmidts to let them know the Selectmen's desire.

Third order of business: Other business. The board discusses 2 possible zoning amendments. The LUA drafted, after previous feedback, the changes. The board discusses whether to make the multifamily density requirements less restrictive and include limiting number of bedrooms. The LUA had density information from other towns that included restrictive and less restrictive. The change talked about was only in the area with town water & sewer. Members were informed of two recent variances granted to convert to very large homes on Ashuelot Street into multifamily buildings. Some members expressed their thoughts on better rentals for young professionals and seniors. These focus groups would only need 1-2 bedrooms. Other members were not in favor of more multifamily housing, but some would agree to condo or apartments. The majority at this time is not in favor of a change.

The board agrees to submit a warrant article to permit off premises signs, roof top signs and hanging signs.

The next meeting of the board will be on Oct. 15th.

J. Sharra moves to adjourn, H. Stephens seconds. The vote is 5 yes. 8:10pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Margaret Sharra, LUA 

Minutes approved by the board on: 10/15/18

Minutes signed by:


Mike Doherty, Chair