

Town of Winchester
Planning Board
Minutes
12-20-21

Meeting opened: 7:00pm.

Members present: Rich Pratt, Gus Ruth, Jenny Rhodes, Dean Beaman (Chair), Christy Davis, Lindseigh Picard (SR) and Jordan Sharra by phone. Margaret Sharra is the Land Use Administrator.

Public: Eric Josephsen (Police Chief), and Barry Kellom (Fire Chief), and Sara Burbee.

First order of business: The board reviews the minutes of 12/6/21 for approval. C. Davis notes some grammar errors. **L. Picard moves to approve the minutes with grammar corrections, J. Rhodes seconds. The vote is 7 yes.**

Second order of business: The board is to review the proposed zoning changes and decide for them to go to a public hearing on 1-3-22. These are the proposed changes to the PRD, new and changed definitions, permitting storage containers, and permitting duplexes by right for properties with town water & sewer.

The Fire and Police Chiefs are here to answer questions from the board regarding if any impact these PRD changes may have on their departments. J. Rhodes refers to the 84 unit housing project in Swanzey and asks Chief Josephsen his thoughts on something like that in Winchester. He would be concerned about larger developments and believes multifamily of multiple stories can be an impact. 1-2 story buildings are less of an impact. 84 units could be an issue for the PD. He has spoken recently with residents and have found some older residents are aging out of their homes and need a place to live in town so small scale developments are ok.

R. Pratt comments to the Chief that he is short staffed now, so what happens if this change is voted in this year and developed this year? The Chief asks if there is something pending now or is this policy changes? There are no applications or discussions now. The Chief says 6 months from now it will be a different story in the staffing of the PD. Staffing will be up to speed. The west side of this state is a forgotten area and makes staffing harder. In 6 months to a year the force will be staffed. 25 units is minimal population increase, 75 people is not huge. R. Pratt says the board is trying to bring affordable into town but if we have multiple projects, he wants to make sure all departments are on board. The Chief says 50 units a year would be ok. He also noted that the school enrollment is down. L. Picard says the difference from the previous year to now is about 30 students and in the last 5 years about 100. The Chief feels that by adding to the base brings in more money to the town. J. Rhodes asks what should the ratio of officers to residents be? The Chief has read, but hasn't check for a while, it is one for every 2K residents. He was hired to protect the town. He would like to be proactive and not reactive.

J. Rhodes asks Chief Kellom if he has any concerns with these changes. He just received a current copy of the changes a few minutes ago. He always has concerns with fire protection. Warwick Road can be a problem. The LUA says the radius of area for these changes is from 10/119E. Chief Kellom would like to be included in each project discussion. He explains that an engineer will design a fire suppression system which he has reviewed by a third party. The Chairman replies of course, it is always important for your input with these applications. The Chief explains buildings/developments use cisterns when town water isn't available. He gives examples of when town water is available and there isn't enough pressure.

G. Ruth asks if the size of the units dictate the size of the cisterns. Yes. G. Ruth asks is the water potable in the tanks. No. He describes, Green Valley, Plumbpak and South Parrish Co-op cisterns.

J. Rhodes asks if the changes would impact the ambulance department. Chief Kellom says it could. Right now they do 700—800 calls a year. This includes the racetracks and covid. J. Rhodes asks if any new equipment would be needed for the fire department. No equipment but more personnel could be.

R. Pratt asks the Police Chief, where would you see a comfortable spot? A cap? The Chief would be comfortable with 25-50 units a year.

J. Rhodes asks the Fire Chief, does the fire department maintain the cisterns? No, but we have assisted South Parrish with filling theirs. We also check on Green Valley to make sure it is full. Now a days the town would not take on the responsibility. The new technology today makes monitoring automatic for the owners. The MH parks are old systems.

The board thanks the Chiefs for their time.

L. Picard clarifies this board is not talking about 80 units like Swanzey is. There is no potential for an 80 unit development. The board continues discussion on the proposal. Most members of the board feel that limiting the total new units to 25 a year is a good idea. L. Picard says between the board, Rick and the Chiefs everything is covered. The total units per year in a PRD format is 25 per year. The majority of the board agree to add this limit to the PRD.

J. Rhodes is opposed to permitting residential in the business district. She says people can drive to work. Young professionals want the hustle and bustle, there is nothing in Winchester for them.

D. Beaman says the existing PRD has been in place for a long time, our business districts have been there a long time and now we have a beautiful business park. J. Rhodes says we don't have a high school, only 2 police officers, and little internet. She's been open minded. R. Pratt disagrees with residential in the business district. Look at the opposition Swanzey is having. What if the VFW folded? How would development be next to the Arlington? The LUA explains if any PRD was to be in the business districts they would need an SE. This is another level of approval by the ZBA to determine if it is a good fit for that area.

The LUA tells L. Picard where the business districts are. D. Beaman to J. Rhodes, are you saying you don't want to displace places for businesses? Yes. L. Picard there are many limits put in place with this ordinance. She is not seeing those areas in high demand, but the need for an SE in those areas is appropriate, and it still needs PB approval. R. Pratt remembers a year ago the Selectmen Rep said the water line improvements were going to happen this year on Warwick Road and last meeting Rick said they weren't going to because they weren't getting a grant. Now it is sometime in the future. D. Beaman says Rick said Warwick would be a problem for anything that needs a sprinkler. G. Ruth clarifies a total per year. Yes, it could be 2 ten units and a five, or any denomination to make 25. The LUA reminds the board of the purpose and standards, these clearly state increments of construction and why. These are used in the decision process. If a proposal has a 100 student impact to the schools that could be a reason for denial, or if the property needed sprinklers and the developer couldn't do it, then that is a reason for denial because of life safety. The Chairman asks J. Sharra if she has any questions at this time, no.

G. Ruth clarifies the existing PRD (1989) in place will stay unless the voters approve changes in March. G. Ruth asks about Work force housing rate vs Market rate. The LUA gives a broad explanation. \$900 per month vs \$1300. She also reads our attorneys definition of workforce housing which is on the last page of the handouts. The LUA left at 8am.


G. Ruth asks about the occupancy chart. The members have questions.

Members question about the 25% open space. This is in the existing ordinance. There is further discussion on whether it should be "should" or "shall" for open space stay in natural state. They talk about how to insure what is approved stays with the property. D. Beaman reminds the board it is their right to impose conditions. There are questions about the landscaped buffer. How does a road impact that?

L. Picard moves to hold a public hearing on the proposed amendments on 1-3-22, J. Sharra seconds. The vote is 5 yes, 1 no(JR), and 1 abstain(RP).

L. Picard moves to adjourn, C. Davis seconds. The vote is 7 yes. 8:27pm.

Minutes Respectfully submitted:

Margaret Sharra, LUA 

Minutes approved on: 1/3/22

Minutes signed by:


Dean Beaman, Chairman