

**Ashland Planning Board Meeting
Minutes
February 4, 2015**

Members Present: Susan MacLeod, Cheryl Cox, Phil Preston (BOS alternate)

Members Absent: Fran Newton (BOS representative)

Others Present: Norm DeWolfe, Kathleen DeWolfe

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by Chairman Susan MacLeod.

DISPOSITION OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of December 3 and December 17, 2014, and January 7 and January 28, 2015, were deferred to the next meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman MacLeod shared the February 4, 2015, issue of *NewsLink* from the NH Municipal Association. Of particular interest is the March 11 webinar “Public Records: Conquer Them Before They Conquer You.”

OLD BUSINESS

Design Standards discussion continued from previous meetings and will continue at future meetings. Key items and questions raised at this meeting include:

- Design standards in a variety of towns should be reviewed, including Windham, Milford, Amherst, Alton, Weare, Derry, Lyme, Durham, North Hampton, Stratham, Salem, etc.
- Ashland is an eclectic mix of styles.
- Reference to design or appearance standards is typically a general purpose statement in a planning document, with details outlined in the zoning ordinance and/or site plan regulations.
- Ashland has 1 industrial and 2 commercial zones with differing requirements (e.g., signs), but no design standards for those areas.
- If we cannot identify an existing style (as a standard) in our commercial area, can we define what we don't want?
- We currently have nothing in our zoning requirements that prohibit first floor apartments in the commercial downtown, but we do have the requirement that new dwellings must provide 2 off-street parking spaces per unit. This is our only deterrent to first floor apartments replacing businesses in a commercial area.
- For our commercial areas, we can start by making changes in the site plan regulations, which will require public hearings for the changes, but not necessitate a ballot vote.
- We need to understand where Ashland's industrial and 2 commercial zones are, what streets are included or excluded, by having detailed maps available. (The “word” descriptions of the zones need to be compared with/marked on actual maps.)
- If an existing building in an industrial or commercial zone is demolished, what standards are used for any new building? – current codes and standards.
- Does Ashland require a permit for building demolition? Is there a timeline in the process that would provide time to attempt to save historic buildings from demolition?

- We need clearly communicated details so that a new business coming in has sufficient advanced knowledge of any regulations and restrictions.
- Development of design standards for Ashland can be worked on in gradual or incremental steps.
- We need to communicate to the public that establishing design standards for the commercial area does not restrict what residential owners can do with their property. We also need to communicate that we are not establishing a historic district with restrictive requirements.
- We should review all previous Ashland master plans, enterprise and downtown improvement plans, charrettes, and other similar documents for relevant recommendations that have been made in the past.
- Elements to consider – sidewalks and walkability, building materials, lighting, facades, parking, setbacks, etc.
- Some challenges specific to Ashland include slopes and seasonal issues (e.g., roofline causing ice to fall onto a sidewalk).
- Certain issues must be considered with a long-term perspective, such as parking.

OTHER BUSINESS

The *Building Permit* form should be reviewed and/or revised, possibly by the Land Use Review group.

- There is no indication on the form whether the property/project is residential or commercial/multi-family (which would trigger a full site plan review, waiver of a full site plan review, and/or application to the Zoning Board).
- There is no indication on the form whether the project is a change of use or expansion of a business (which would trigger actions by the Planning Board and/or the Zoning Board).
- The form should include a statement that issuing of a building permit does not supersede other permits or approvals that may be required.
 - That statement also needs to be communicated consistently by the Building Inspector.
- The form is lengthy, with multiple sections, and confusing.

The next meeting is the Work Session, February 25, 6:30 pm at the Town Office.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 pm.

Minutes submitted by Mardean Badger