

APPROVED

**Town of Pownal
Planning Board Minutes
Tuesday, February 13, 2024
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Todd Mellin, Marcia Bowen, Brian Stornelli, Orion Breen, Thomas Ursia, Town Planner, Ginnifir Giddige, Code Enforcement Officer, Sam Peikes from NorthStar and Recording Secretary, Alison Purinton

Members Absent: Matt Altieri, Mercedes Pour- Previti- excused, Bill Schmidt- excused

Guests: Jon Morris, Selectman

Call to Order at: 6:12 pm by Todd Mellin

Secretary's Report: Approval of Meeting minutes for January 17, 2024

Orion- I move that we accept the minutes as amended for the January 17th meeting. Brian to seconded. All were in favor 4-0. Motion carries

Old Business:

Update on Selectboard meeting re Planning board budget.

Marcia- The budget that was submitted last month was approved.

New Business

Presentation by NorthStar

Sam- I can provide context for some of the ordinance work.

1. Solar farm standards as discussed years ago. It would involve submission requirements and performance standards and definitions as well. This will be an intensive as the new standards for conservation subdivision.
2. Site plan review checklist. Currently there is a site plan review checklist that is different than written in the ordinance. It is important to be consistent. Also updating the process and procedures.
3. Site plan sections
4. Definitions. Some contain performance standards which don't belong there.

Brian- Sam, Do you have a template that you typically use from other towns?

Sam- We have worked closely with other towns on this. I can give examples of what towns generally look for. It could include solar panels specifications, use analysis, additional buffering. Also decommissioning plans when the solar finishes its life cycle. We can get examples.

Jon- I highly encourage the board to create a solar farm ordinance and include a battery storage facility.

Todd- Is that something you can do and then we can review and make changes too?

Sam- Yes

Review of CEO and Planner priorities, Discussion Planning Board priorities

Marcia- Allowing for public hearings in advance of the June Town Meeting, we should think about what we can get done by May in terms of priorities. The FEMA ordinance needs to be completed.

Tom- The site plan review needs a lot of work, and it is a very critical piece. So many of the planning board reviews involve site plan review. You need it to help the town's advantage. I am an advocate of detail. It will be very helpful. You can either patch what you have or start fresh.

Todd- When we alter the process will those things need to go before town vote.

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Tom- We can internally make decisions if it is a minor change. Let's go through Ginny and my points and then circle back.

Marcia- We should remove the checklists from the website. It is still not accurate. Then we can decide the timeline.

Ginny- Here are the things I would like to see.

1. Make definitions clear, as some are duplications.
2. I would like to see an ordinance for a minimum house size. I suggest 650 square feet. There once was this definition and it was somehow deleted.
3. Something about Air B&B/ Short term rentals. We have contradictory definitions.

Orion- I think going with the state minimum of 400 sq. feet makes sense.

Todd- The Selectboard would prefer 650 square feet.

Brian- I think mobile homes fall in there also with a minimum of 750 sq feet.

Jon- We need to prioritize a minimum for now.

Sam- Accessory Definitions will be cleaned up as part of LD2003.

Jon- We currently have 13 Short term rentals. We need to create some type of registry for EMS personnel as a minimum.

Todd- I did review some short- term rentals. Some just defined it and some have created a registry.

Jon- It should be a home occupation. The town needs to have something.

Marcia- We don't want to be in a reactive mode.

Brian- What about a broad definition to give Ginny some guidance. This gives us time to create something.

Todd- How much of a role should have in this? I am looking at the work that needs to be done and the work that we have to do.

Jon- Your role is to listen to the checklist, deliberate and give feedback. You are the ones directly affected. The Selectboard and Town Planner would be the ones to decide, however we would appreciate your input.

Todd- I appreciate that.

Tom- We have to recognize how comprehensive those definitions are. The term Air B&B is used quite universally. I have found 13 different variants of that term. It is a big project. Definitions provide clarity. The next topic I want to bring up is aquifers. It is your town's largest resource. I would like to bring to your attention some danger zones or red flags, whether it be in a workshop meeting or scheduled meeting. We have a lot of mega data and I have done some plots. We need to think of another layer of protection. Water is our greatest asset. I have also put down a food truck ordinance. It is trending, as the town considers a farmer's market. It typically is a temporary use or a seasonal one. FEMA I am still concerned that there is no mapping at this time. Municipalities need to put some pressure on these agencies. I suspect the maps are pending right now. I will keep checking on a weekly basis. I will also keep Marcia apprised so the board has time to look at it. There are some things that I need to bring to the Selectboard's attention. On the site plan review, we have spoken about quite a bit and definitely needs strengthening.

Todd- I appreciate the time of everyone to help. It seems to me that FEMA takes priority. How much time is required from the Planning Board?

Tom- If you were to see the documents in advance.

Jon- The Selectboard would like the Planning Board to prioritize that list. Give that list to us and then we need to fund it. We need feedback as soon as possible.

Todd- A lot of this is new information to use I think it is helpful to quickly walk through this. I think we can run through something and then talk with the board and see what we want to tackle are my thoughts. Cleaning up the broken bits for the site plan review makes sense to me. We can come up with a list and put that to bed.

Marcia- It sounds like that is a big task.

Tom- You could do a complete overhaul or patch the broken pieces. We want to make sure it is snug.

Orion- Sam are we waiting on the State for the LD2003 on things?

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Sam- Everything is all set. I can send the memo that I sent to Tom, however it is mostly cleaning up the definitions.

Brian- It ties in to LD2003 and indirectly the aquifer it ties into development.

Todd- That is my list to prioritize our time. Sam, I assume you will be dealing with the cleanup of definitions and then we can review.

Sam- The cleaning up and clarifying definitions will not take so much time. If it includes the addition of new definitions that will take more time.

Brian- It is a two-step process to tee up the definitions of what we have and then a list of new definitions.

Todd- That sounds good.

Orion- I can see this can lead to a larger conversation.

Todd- We need to have priorities for June. I have FEMA, definitions, site plan review process, checklists need to be done first and before the town, perhaps that stuff done for June. Solar Farm should be considered as it sounds like there is a push from the Selectboard.

Tom- If the board is thinking about Solar Farms the key points would be decommission, they do have a life expectancy and the rehabilitation of the site when there is no more solar farm. It is a very complex process we have seen it. The complexity of where you dump this stuff. Battery containment is an issue along with how they are stored. I would like to move back to site plan review. The best thing to do its look at the critical things that need remedies fix some of those then attempt a major overhaul.

Marcia- Can the FEMA ordinance be drafted by March? We can then talk about the broken bits of site plan.

Prioritization of Planning Board Materials

The FEMA, definitions, and site plan review are next, potentially Solar Farms. Then look at food trucks and campgrounds as time goes on.

Todd- I want to go back to LD 2003. Is there something else that we need to do with that?

Sam- There is nothing the board has to do. We have already addressed those changes.

Status of Bradbury Mt. Campground

Marcia- It should have never come to us first. It is going to Board of Appeals.

Tom- It is an administrative appeal. It is hugely different than any other appeal. We need to wait until the 29th and await the outcome. It came to us in February as the applicant misunderstood the process.

Status of CMP facility upgrade

Tom- I have been in communication with a gentleman named Sam Rice. We are going through the details. The plans have not been submitted. It is mostly maintenance. It is always good to go through the review. He hopes to have those things in by March.

Town Annual Report submittal due April 10

Marcia went over what she plans to submit.

Other Business

Todd- Sam will have definitions by next month, and FEMA. Should we review the broken bits.

Tom- Yes. I will take some of the areas and bring the most beneficial ones forward.

Marcia- I will be out of the country right before the meeting. Todd volunteers to write up the agenda.

Ginny- Will bring the minimum footage info.

Adjourn

Todd- I move that we adjourn the meeting. Marcia to second. All in Favor meeting adjourned at 7:50pm

Respectively submitted,

Alison Purinton

Planning Board Recording Secretary