Plainfield Planning Commission Minutes

Monday August 18th 2025

Present: Will Colgan, David Scheckman, Jesse Cooper, and Arion Thibourmery

Will called the meeting to order and asked for a motion to the minutes of the last meeting. David made the motion and Jesse seconded it. The motion was approved.

Will provided an update on the progress of the zoning permit applications for the Goddard Campus. He met with Mike Davidson (for Goddard), Karen Storey (as Zoning Administrator) and Sandy Vitzhum, who has been helping Mike with the permits. They all decided on a plan to complete the information Karen needed on the buildings and uses. There would be permitted uses and conditional uses on separate permits. The conditional uses could be considered at one Development Review Board (DRB) meeting in the future. The idea was to keep the process simple and flexible as the buildings may have different uses in the future.

He said the Select Board has approved the liquor license for the restaurant at Goddard. It will then have to be approved at the Liquor Control Board meeting in September. The Select Board had previously not agreed to the license pending Goddard's completing the permit applications. Now that the permits are underway they were willing to approve the license.

Will described how the Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) boundary was going to have an application submitted to change the NDA boundary to include the entire Plainfield property of Goddard. The Water/Wastewater Commission (W/WW) had a meeting where they agreed to serve the entire property outside the mandatory 200 foot buffer zone up to the allowed capacity that Goddard currently has. At that meeting the W/WW Commission asked Mike Davidson for some capacity estimates of their wastewater usage. Goddard has it's own water system so that was not as much of a concern. Mike said he would work on that.
The state agency approving the NDA thought the town would be better served in the future by resolving the conflict in the Village District which has 1/5 acre with sewer and 2 acre without sewer service. They suggested having the Village District only be the sewer served area or expanding where the sewer service could be so the Village District would have the highest possible density. This is something to consider in the future.

Jesse gave a brief description of the DRB hearing on a subdivision that has taken months to resolve and is still not done. It is an example of an applicant being the estate but having the heirs also be a party. This in an example of why the definitions and the permit it self need to be clear. This particular DRB decision could be appealed to the Environmental Court. David would like to add the Marshfield clause that says if the DRB needs legal advice the applicant will cover that cost. He would also like to see a way to require or "request" that the applicant attend the hearings. Will suggested that could be a policy of the DRB but making it a legal requirement could be difficult when the applicants are out of town corporations.

Will said the proposed definition for the new draft of Person is the first half of the ACT 250 definition of Person so it has been extensively litigated and tested. The draft language for applicant seems reasonably clear:

Applicant: The owner of land or property proposed to be subdivided or developed in accordance with these regulations and/or a person duly authorized by the owner of the land to be subdivided or developed. The permit will be attached to the land of the current and future owners.

It would be good to clear up the language around how the permit "follows the land" concept.

We spoke about reviewing the zoning application and how that would need to be filled out before the warned sketch plan review.
It would be good to review the permit fees along with the application.

Will suggested we might want to revisit the idea of a small subdivision that is bigger than an exempt subdivision but smaller than 4 lots. It would be the minor subdivisions where it is a simple division of land where it could be possible to streamline the process. He would ask Karen for examples of recent subdivision where this might work.

David suggested that this provision of the Marshfield subdivision regulations would be helpful in defining how PUD's also have to meet the subdivision regulations.

1100 Coordination with Planned Unit Development (PUD) Review
Subdivision applications for a PUD shall be reviewed as major subdivisions. Conditional use review may occur concurrently with subdivision review if all application and procedural requirements pertaining to each respective review process are met. PUDs shall meet the review standards set forth in the Marshfield Town Zoning Regulations, as well as subdivision standards defined in these regulations.

The current Plainfield language is:
Section 7.2 Applicability An applicant may apply for PUD approval from the Development Review Board, as allowed within designated zoning districts, either in conjunction with application for subdivision approval, or as a conditional use review

David felt the Marshfield language was clearer and so we should consider making that change.

There was some discussion of how the PUD and Subdivision language duplicated each other. Will said he would see about getting a summary of the differences to review.

There was a discussion of the role of the Zoning Administrator as a part time town employee reporting to the Select Board. Karen has been trying to step aside from that position but finding a replacement is difficult even when it's possible to have another town's zoning administrator also do Plainfield's work. The commission expressed it's appreciation of Karen's ability to stay with the work load.

The meeting adjourned at 8 pm