

DRAFT Minutes

Approved on: Sept. 15, 2021

Planning Commission
Town of Ferrisburgh, VT

Approved- Minutes for meeting of August 18, 2021

Note: This meeting was conducted both in-person and remotely. Some participants joined the meeting through a Zoom online meeting, while others were in-person.

Members present: Bob Beach, Jr. (Chair), Gail Blasius, Anne Cohn, Walter Reed II, Bessie Sessions, Arabella Holzapfel, Al Chamberlain, Kristin DeBellis **Members absent:** Michael Quinn

Town official present: Bonnie Barnes, Zoning Administrator, Craig Heindel, Chair of the Conservation Commission, Robyn King, Minute Taker,

Participants present: Doug Goulette, Jeff Goulette, Kristen Goulette, Melinda Kinsey, Kurt Plank

Meeting Called to Order

Bob Beach called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm and explained the agenda and mentioned the site visit that had occurred before the meeting.

Application #21-110 for sketch plan review of 3-lot PUD; 440 Old Hollow Road; applicants Jeffrey & Kristin Goulette; North Ferrisburgh Village (NFVIL) and Rural Agricultural (RA-5) Districts; tax map id no. 18/20/61

After introducing the application, Bob Beach asked if the public had any comments or questions. Melinda Kinsey asked about the boundary adjustment that was made prior to this subdivision being considered and notification. Bonnie Barnes noted that the adjoiningers were notified and if there was not notification it was either by error or Ms. Kinsey may not have been an adjoininger. Bonnie Barnes pointed out that the matter was not warned as it did not need to be warned. Ms. Kinsey pointed out others who were not notified.

Ms. Kinsey asked about frontage for each house proposed and asked if there was 600 feet of frontage. Doug Goulette, representing the Goulettes, noted that they had utilized all the road frontage available and that the first lot had 198 feet of road frontage, and that the other lots did not, but there was flexibility in configurations when pursuing a Planned Unit Development. Ms. Kinsey asked if anyone else in the neighborhood or others had financial involvement, and Walter Reed II clarified this was not a question that would be considered in the matter.

Bob Beach asked if the property had been purchased by the Goulettes, and it was confirmed that it had already been purchased. Gail Blasius asked if there were plans to keep the large trees between the lots, and Jeff Goulette answered affirmatively. Bob Beach noted that they were displayed as still standing on the submitted map. Doug Goulette explained that the next

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set of plans would show the underground electrical lines and that the idea was to keep these opposite of the trees on the side of the new driveway as not to affect the trees or roots. Doug Goulette continued by making a clarification regarding the stakes observed during the site visit. Al Chamberlain asked who the engineer was for the septic system, and Doug Goulette noted he was the engineer for the new septic system.

There being no further questions, ***Gail Blasius made a motion to close the public hearing, which was seconded by Walter Reed II and the public hearing closed at 7:09 pm.***

Gail Blasius asked if Craig Heindel had any recommendations from the Conservation Commission's standpoint. Craig Heindel noted that the Conservation Commission had not reviewed the application but there were no conservation issues as the wetland crossing had been reviewed and approved by the state wetland ecologist. Craig Heindel continued by explaining that the crossing was in a logical place as it was a narrow stretch and there would be the least impact. Craig Heindel noted that the wastewater field is outside of the wetland and there would be a minimal number of trees disturbed and they would be almost all small trees. Craig Heindel noted that wastewater mounds do not have a significant impact on wildlife travel, and he did not imagine the wastewater system would have significant wildlife. Craig Heindel explained that the water supply and wastewater review would be a state process and that the stormwater appeared to be managed properly so there were no issues.

Craig Heindel explained that as a private citizen and neighbor who owns the parcel to the east, neither he nor his wife Judy had any objections.

Bob Beach explained that as this was a Planned Unit Development, there was the authority to modify the dimensional requirements of the zoning regulations and that the application was for the development of the 8-acre parcel. Gail Blasius noted that in walking it, the lots are very symmetrical and that it's a beautiful piece of land and it was imagined that there would be few visual impacts that would need to be mitigated given the amount of vegetation that would be left.

There being no further questions, ***Walter Reed II moved to accept the plan as presented on the condition of the review of the underground electricity from the road to the new house on Lot 3 and there would be one more hearing.***

Al Chamberlain asked if the road that was proposed was in sufficient condition, and it was noted that John Bull needs to determine the curb cut. There was discussion of the need to include a condition of the Road Commissioner and Fire Department approval. Bob Beach thanked those who came in for public comment and noted an interest in ensuring neighbors' interests were well cared for.

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Walter Reed II amended his motion as accepting the sketch plan that was presented, which was seconded by Gail Blasius and the motion passed unanimously.

Doug Goulette noted he would like to re-appear at next month's meeting. Doug Goulette asked about the deference to the Road Commissioner on one entrance versus two entrances. Bob Beach explained that he would need to check in with the Road Commissioner, but it may not make sense to have two roads. Kristin DeBellis asked about state purview in regulating three driveways becoming a private drive. Doug Goulette noted the state may not have jurisdiction over this as there are usually different regulations in different towns. Kristin DeBellis noted it was her understanding that there were implications with the state given the impact on the Fire Marshal and the 911 system. Bob Beach noted the need to check in with the Fire Department and Road Commissioner, and Gail Blasius noted trust in the Road Commissioner's judgement.

Other Business

Bob Beach raised the issue of the Visualizing Density grant and next steps. Arabella Holzapfel pointed out that there has been the receipt of the visualization created by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission and they may want to gather public feedback prior to proceeding to other measures such as an overlay district. Bob Beach asked about the public being informed, and it was noted that this was a topic of discussion at Town Meeting Day in 2020. There was discussion of means to conduct public outreach, with the possibility of a summary being posted on Front Porch Forum or in other locations.

Bonnie Barnes noted that there are already tools available in the zoning regulations to encourage density and asked about the intent of informing the public. Bonnie Barnes asked about the benefits of an overlay district and what would be included in an overlay. There was discussion of the process that would need to happen if any changes were made to the current zoning regulations. Current tools available to the Boards were also discussed, such as Planned Unit Developments and waivers, although it was noted that waivers should be used judiciously as to not create inequities in determinations.

There was discussion of the benefits of overlay districts, in that they create separate rules for certain areas than those that exist in other parts of town and it was remarked by Bonnie Barnes that she has seen this in the context of natural resources. Bonnie Barnes noted that the Planned Unit Development tool helps to overcome barriers for density for subdivisions. Gail Blasius pointed to an example from Cornwall where there was increased density regulations in some zones, but the outcome was primarily for developers who had resources to put in place water systems, roadways, and sidewalks and given the constraints with land and septic in the Town this may not be that common. There was conversation about potential septic resources on specific parcels.

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Kristin DeBellis noted that she understood overlay districts to have flexibility in terms of setbacks and potentially not lot sizes. Bonnie Barnes explained there were waiver provisions and asked if it seemed that with the language already available if any exceptions to setbacks could already be made without creating new rules. Kristin DeBellis explained that there could be districts such as a historic district or village district that could bring in state funding or grants which could be an advantage. Bonnie Barnes asked if it would make sense to have an overlay or a separate district. Arabella Holzapfel pointed out scenarios in which multi-family developments could be built in the context of having less than one acre zoning, and Bonnie Barnes explained this may already be achievable with the Planned Unit Development provisions.

Kristin DeBellis asked if there was a discouragement of density given that the zoning regulations may not be worded in a way to encourage developers to come to Ferrisburgh. Arabella Holzapfel noted that with an overlay there could be a description of setbacks and lot sizes that would be uniform to the way that Ferrisburgh would like to see mixed-use development, but the overlays could be in different positions. Gail Blasius asked about the demand for this kind of language and noted that the Planned Unit Development language is already in place if people are interested in pursuing it. Kristin DeBellis pointed out that there may not be a demand because the language isn't promotional enough and there are clear needs in terms of housing for aging populations who are potentially leaving the state due to housing pressures. Anne Cohn explained that with a Planned Unit Development, there needs to be a property set-aside which in some cases could make a difference, which Bonnie Barnes noted was correct and that this could be a trade off between an overlay district and a Planned Unit Development.

Bob Beach pointed to a few recent examples where larger developments fell through due to technical details and also mentioned the limited capacity in the Town for septic development. Bob Beach noted the opportunity that could be available to the Town of Ferrisburgh if there was a concerted effort to connect to the Vergennes water system. Bob Beach explained there were some densities in the current zoning language which may not be sensible given the current land opportunities. Bonnie Barnes explained that the zoning regulations had been put forward as a phased effort with the second phase focusing on density.

There was a discussion on public attitudes toward increasing density of the Town, with Kristin DeBellis noting some of the pressures of the School District expressing a need for additional students and families. Kristin DeBellis pointed out that Ferrisburgh was becoming a bedroom community and it may make sense to set the stage for development to come. Gail Blasius pointed out some of the potential advantages of creating a historic district or a town center district and there could be grant money or tax credits available. There was discussion of the current demand for updates to the zoning regulations, and specifics of the current housing market. It was noted that it did not seem that there was significant demand for increased development beyond what is already available at the moment.

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Minutes Approval

Gail Blasius made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, with the modifications of noting Michael Quinn and Al Chamberlain were not present, which was seconded by Anne Cohn and the motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Arabella Holzapfel made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 pm and the meeting was adjourned by consensus.