

Orford Planning Board

December 18, 2017

Board Minutes

Approved January 15, 2018

*Minutes were taken by Liz Kelly

Present

- *Committee Members:* Jim McGoff (Chair), Kelley Monahan (Vice Chair), Dave Smith (Select Board ex officio), Paul Carreiro, Chase Kling, Deb McGoff, Tom Thomson, Mark Burger (alternate)
- *Resilience Planning & Design LLC:* Liz Kelly

7:00 PM: Jim called the meeting to order. Committee members stated their names for the record.

1. Review of November 20, 2017 Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Chase moved to accept the November 20, 2017 minutes as submitted; Tom seconded. Jim opened the topic for discussion.

Jim moved that the board enter a discussion about the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Tom asked the board to look at the Master Plan Survey section of the minutes. He asked the board to consider a survey question that asks if Orford residents would like to see a gas station in town. Chase responded that this can be discussed as part of tonight's Master Plan Survey discussion and said that he brought two possible survey questions, as assigned at the last meeting.

Regarding the November Informal Preliminary Consultation with Richard Scalesse, Chase noted that the board needs to be clear in their communications to applicants about the application process. He clarified that Richard does need an updated survey produced by a licensed surveyor as part of his application. The updated survey must be in Mylar form for the Registry of Deeds and paper copies for the Planning Board.

Tom commented that it seemed to be a cumbersome requirement for this applicant to have to pay for a surveyor to complete an entirely new survey. Chase responded that it merely needs to be an updated survey, not a whole new survey. Kelley clarified that the applicant may not have to pay a surveyor to walk the property again, but would have to pay for the surveyor to digitally edit and print new plans. Tom asked if the board has always required a licensed survey. Chase responded, yes, the board would require this for any new minor subdivision. Kelley distributed handouts to the board on plat law procedures and requirements.

Jim asked if there were any more comments on the minutes. Chase asked if the Planning Assistant invoice was approved. Dave responded that yes, the select board approved it and it was paid. Chase specified the importance that the Planning Board pay all its invoices for work completed in the 2017 fiscal year to avoid payment complications in January and to avoid funds rolling into the General Fund in 2018. Jim mentioned that the board will also have to review and approve Stacie's invoice for work completed in August-December.

After confirming no additional discussion, **Jim moved to approve the November 20, 2017 minutes as written; Kelley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Chase mentioned that he included a few lines in the draft annual report stating that the board deeply appreciates everything Stacie is doing as Recording Secretary. Kelley mentioned that Stacie will need to correct the invoice she submitted to omit December's meeting (as she wasn't able to attend).

2. Master Plan Survey Discussion

Jim asked if Liz had anything new to present or discuss. Liz said that she'd like to hear the survey questions everyone brought.

Paul's questions included:

- **What types of development do you prefer in Orford?** The question would include a list of possible responses include industrial, commercial, a mix of residential and commercial, no development, and other.
- **Which of the following commercial enterprises do you wish to see in Orford?** Rate them following from highest to lower: professional offices, a mix of commercial and residential on one lot, restaurants, home businesses, hotel, service/gas station, grocery store, tourism, agricultural businesses, no commercial development, and other.

Paul noted that the board could also consider other types of businesses to include, such as banks. Chase expressed his appreciation for Paul's questions, particularly because residents and property owners are concerned about the tax base.

Dave's question included:

- **In general, how do people feel about population growth?**

Paul noted that he also had a question related to population.

- **In your opinion, what category best represents Orford's rate of growth?** Paul stated a few categories to include with this question.

Chase liked this question because there is a lot of development happening in the region, particularly in Lebanon, and understanding how the town feels about the rate of growth and planning for that accordingly will become increasingly important. Kelley noted that Lebanon's taxes are increasing by 20% to accommodate infrastructure improvements for new housing units in the city.

Kelley's first question included:

- **What is your vision for the future for the Orford Academy Building?** Responses could include tear it down, etc. She noted that the project was rated last in the scoring process.

Chase mentioned that the master plan questions should be broader and more general in how they focus on town issues and services, while Kelley thought that this is a serious and current town issue that the public should be asked about.

Kelley's second question included:

- **Do you believe the Town of Orford would benefit from a building permit or site plan review process?**

Chase commented that having building permits is dependent on whether a town has zoning. He said that the Planning Board could determine if it's time to review whether people want zoning again since the demographics are changing. Jim noted that the board already initiated conversations about zoning in the past and thought the board was finished with that topic. Chase responded that Master Plans are the basis for a zoning ordinance, so it is relevant to ask the towns people. Paul reiterated Kelley's questions to the group for clarification.

Chase questions included:

- **Briefly tell the planning board why you live or do business in Orford.** How do you see the town in 15-20 years in terms of its land use? Why do you live here and why do you do business here? Where do you see the town going?
- **What level of town government services do you want/expect?** Responses could include police, fire, etc. How much are towns people willing to pay in taxes to provide these services? Chase noted that capital planning is an important function of the Planning Board and that this would be a good question for that purpose.

Dave appreciated this question and reiterated its importance to the select board. Chase mentioned that New Hampshire used to have a state policy for road maintenance in the winter (largely for the tourism sector), but times have changed.

Deb's questions included:

- **Would you like a non-profit organization in town that doesn't contribute to the town tax base or would you like to see a business in town who contributes to the tax base?**
- **Would you like to see the town beach improved?** She commented that the beach is in rough condition for kids.

Tom's first question included:

- **Are the Orford townspeople in favor of agritourism?** Agritourism would include farm stands, farm to table restaurants, farm lodging, etc. Tom said that agritourism could be a way for the town to increase commercial activity, keep farms viable, and promote open space.

Chase mentioned that Vermont, unlike New Hampshire, invests a high amount of state and local dollars in their agricultural sector and now has many bed and breakfasts, farm stays, and active sustainable farm operations where people can participate in farm work. Vermont takes this sector of their economy seriously and is backed by state and local support. Tom agreed with Chase, stating that property tax structure in Vermont is much more favorable to farming than New Hampshire's is (largely because they don't tax the buildings). Dave commented that an agritourism question could let people know that the town is in favor of agriculture and agritourism.

Chase commented that the town could promote agriculture in its Master Plan to show townspeople they have a serious commitment to agriculture. Jim noted that there are a few farms in town that do host farm days where the public can visit and participate in farm related activities. He stated that

many farms know they must diversify operations to stay in business now. Mark responded that a landowner that owns large amounts of land may be interested in agritourism as a business venture. Jim noted that farms with event spaces are popular right now.

Tom's second question included:

- **What do people think about the educational system in town?**

Chase noted that education has been part of other Master Plans in the past and it can certainly be included in this our efforts now. Jim would like to ask a question related to spending on town services and equipment. He stated that the way the fire and highway department are overspending funds is burdening the older people and keeping the young people out. Chase spoke about the opportunity to share more of these services and cost of equipment with other towns to alleviate tax payers. The town could consider entering a mutual aid system with other nearby small towns to cut taxes. Jim agreed that multi-town equipment purchasing would be a great move.

Dave clarified that Chase's question was focused more about level of town services, whereas Jim's question focused on how adequately tax money is being spent in town. Jim agreed and noted that the town's grader is an example of a piece of equipment that was too costly for how often its being used and that it's not good for the equipment for it to sit unused when another town could also be using in a mutual aid system. Tom responded that the town did just spend \$8000-\$9000 for a new set of grader tires because the tires were cracked and weathered from the sun. Tom updated the board that the town does have a contract with Fairlee for ambulance services but that they're increasing their costs by \$20,000 this year and another \$20,000 the next year. The increasing cost of equipment is one reason why the cost of the contract will be more.

Jim's other question included:

- **Do the townspeople want to see a senior living facility in Orford?**

Jim read Sam Hanford's two questions from a letter:

- **What kind of businesses should be in town and where?**
- **What do townspeople think of affordable housing?**

Jim noted that he would like the survey include at most 12 to 15 questions. Liz asked if there were any questions discussed at the last meeting that the board would like to consider putting on the survey (covering topics such as energy efficiency). Paul stated the important of focusing in on the most important questions to keep the survey succinct and to the point.

Paul read a question he developed that he thought would tie some of the other questions together:

- **Which of the following should the town actively be encouraging?** Agritourism, recreation, attracting more stores and shops, keeping the cost of living affordable for current residents, attracting enterprises that contribute to the tax base, nothing, or other.

Chase asked if the board wants to include a question about open space and conservation to find out what people value in terms of natural resources in town. Dave thought this would be good to include.

Kelley proposed a few more question:

- **Would the town be interested in bonding for broadband internet services? Or pooling with another town?**
- **What are your expectations for law enforcement coverage? (i.e. 24/7, immediate response, etc.)**
- **How important is dark skies and light pollution to you?**

Paul proposed another question:

- **Rate the following issues by how important they are to you.** Answers could include important, not important, etc. Issues could include natural resource protection, commercial development, etc.

Paul commented that he thought the survey should be 8-10 questions. Chase asked if the board should solicit questions by the community. The board determined that, while it would be nice to ask the public, it would draw out the process too long. Dave proposed that at the end of the survey there could be space for additional input.

The board discussed how they would like to proceed with the survey question discussion. Jim said that he doesn't want to rush this process and would like to set time aside in January to continue the discussion. Liz said that she could consolidate all the questions asked into one handout and bring it to the next meeting. She captured the basic questions but may need to reach out to some people who had lengthier questions, like Paul, to make sure they're correct. Paul noted that he would most likely not have time to discuss this over the next few weeks. It was decided that Liz will bring the list of questions to the January meeting to serve as a starting point for discussion. Mark asked that Paul review and finalize his questions so that she can integrate those into the survey form.

3. New Business and Public Comments

- [Mail File](#)

Kelley moved to approve the Recording Secretary invoice dated August-November as corrected; Deb seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Jim asked if the Master Plan Contract encumbrance has been approved to which Dave will check.

Jim moved to approve the Planning Assistant Invoice for November/December; Tom seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

It was discussed that the board will be able to approve the December invoice and use 2017 funds at the next meeting if the invoice dated before 12/31/17. Paul proposed that, because of the sensitive timeline, the board give permission for the invoice to be submitted to Jim and Kelley who can review and sign under their discretion. The board had no problem with this. Liz will submit the last invoice of the year before 12/31/17.

- [Town Report](#)

Chase asked for feedback on his draft town report for the Planning Board. He said that the town report is a way for the board to connect with the townspeople and tell them what has been accomplished and upcoming activities. Jim thanked the board for all their help during his first year

as Chair and thanked Chase for drafting the Planning Board's report. Kelley noted that it would be good to hear Jim thanking the board members in the town report.

Tom recommended the town report include a list of board members and the board's regular meeting dates. Chase said that he could also add the Planning Assistant contact information. Chase stated that the deadline for the reports to be submitted to Sherri is January 12, and the next Planning Board meeting is January 15. Kelley and Dave said that they thought there is probably some flexibility with the January 12 deadline.

Paul noted that the board hasn't made any final decisions on how the survey will be distributed and to who. Kelley mentioned that Sherri will print out labels based on the tax bill addresses for the survey. It was discussed that the survey will be sent to a blended list of registered voters and taxpayers. Dave suggested writing "early in 2018 a survey will be mailed out and all recipients are strongly urged to respond."

Tom expressed concern about distributing the survey online. He also had concern about encouraging young people, such as middle and high schoolers, to fill out the survey. Everyone agreed. Kelley recommended that the survey require a signature. Chase noted that this could be a deterrent for some people. He also noted that the board shouldn't require one questionnaire per household in case there are differing opinions in one house.

4. Old Business

Paul asked if there should be a sentence included in the report stating that the Orford Planning Board voted to send correspondence to the grant commission stating opposition to the Orford Academy Building project. Paul volunteered to write a sentence about the academy. The board agreed to finalizing the report at the next Planning Board meeting.

Paul informed the board that the Community Development Finance Authority had their meeting to vote on whether to approve a half a million-dollar grant for the academy project. Paul reviewed the CDFA website where they were supposed to post a meeting agenda and saw that it was never posted, and meeting venue was changed. Paul wrote them questioning why they didn't follow their noticing procedures and why they didn't post notices in Orford. He asked that they respond directly to the Planning Board. Kelley said they have received no responses so far.

5. Discuss January Agenda

Chase mentioned that there are some statutory updates to the legislature that would be worth talking about at our next meeting, to which Jim agreed that this could be discussed next month. It was also determined that the Heide Miller merger application will be discussed next month.

Jim moved to adjourn, and Dave seconded. Motion passed unanimously (9:03 PM).