11/20/2019 PB Minutes

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
Planning Board
November 20, 2019

BETHLEHEM TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM
Minutes
6:00 pm

Present:   Chairman Johnathan Stevenson, Mike Bruno, Chris McGrath, Marie Stevenson and ex-officio Chris Jensen
Alternates: Peter Roy and Anthony Rodrigues
Student liaison: Nick Meachen
Excused absence: Kevin Roy and Kim Koprowski
Chairman Johnathan Stevenson opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.
Chairman Stevenson announced that Anthony Rodrigues and Peter Roy will be full voting members, due to Kim Koprowski and Kevin Roy not being able to attend.
Chairman Stevenson then read the agenda.
The first thing was the proposed warrant article for manufactured homes.
Chris Jensen said he had researched it and talked to other local officials and came up with a possible warrant article. But he said it was just a starting point for the planning board. He said he was looking for help from the other members of the planning board to make it better.
He said it is a tricky issue and he tried to balance the need for affordable housing with protecting neighbors worried about their property values.
Here is what he wrote:
“To see if manufactured (mobile) homes as defined by the state of New Hampshire (RSA 674:31), meeting the most recent federal (H.U.D.) standards including a Thermal Zone 3 rating and having a HUD-approved frost protected slab or foundation shall be allowed on single lots in District II with a special exception. If this article fails manufactured homes will still be limited to special parks or subdivisions.”
Chris McGrath said there is a need for affordable housing and people should be able to do what they want on their own land.
Marie Stevenson said some manufactured homes are beautiful and nobody should put down people who live in them because there are a lot of people who cannot afford big houses.
She said she was still on the fence because it goes both ways but there is too much telling people in town what they can and cannot do.
Peter Roy said most of the manufactured homes he has seen are on slabs and he thinks the town has the right to require that. He said this looks like a step in the right direction.
Mike Bruno said he liked the idea of requiring homes to be on slabs.
Mr. Bruno said abutters should be protected and it was a good idea to require owners of manufactured homes to get a special exception from the Zoning Board of Appeals.
Mr. Bruno said he thought the proposed warrant article struck a good balance because it does not limit manufactured homes to parks or subdivisions, but it also requires a special exception from the Zoning Board of Appeals to make sure it fits into the neighborhood.
Voters will have a chance to decide in March.
Mr. McGrath said he thought it was wrong to put too many conditions on manufactured homes since the town does not put restrictions on what stick-built homes look like.
Board members said they thought it was too complicated for the article to have information about thermal loading and a slab that meets certain federal frost standards and those would be required anyway by the federal government. They agreed to take those out.
Mr. McGrath asked why manufactured homes would only be allowed in District II and Mr. Bruno said that was a good question.
Mr. Bruno said under the current zoning manufactured home parks or subdivisions are allowed in District One, Two, Three and Four, with the permission of the ZBA. He said they are not allowed in District One Main Street even as a special exception.
He proposed not limiting it to District II and the board agreed.
Mr. Bruno said the proposed warrant was not perfect, but it does try to fix the problem that the town has. That is not being able to enforce the 1987 zoning regulation. This gives voters something to consider, he said.
Mr. McGrath said it is better than the problem that the town has now.
Mr. Bruno made a motion to accept the proposed article to go on the ballot in March and Mrs. Stevenson seconded it. It passed 7-0.
Here is what passed.
“To see if manufactured (mobile) homes as defined by the state of New Hampshire (RSA 674:31), meeting the federal (H.U.D.) standards adopted in 2000 and having a slab or foundation shall be allowed on single lots if given permission by the Zoning Board of Appeals. If this article fails, starting in April 2020 manufactured homes will be limited to special parks or subdivisions.”
Closed public hearing manufactured homes
Open hearing on 2020 budget.
Chairmen Stevenson said he was contacted by the select board and asked not to talk about personnel matters in public.
Mike Bruno explained that he looked over 2016-2018 budgets and how much money was used each year in different categories to determine his proposed budget cut. He said his review shows there is room to reduce the budget and minimize the impact on taxpayers. It is the town’s money, he said.
Mr. Bruno said he thinks $1,918 could be taken out of the $22,692 budget without hurting the planning board’s ability to do its job.
Mr. Jensen said saving money for taxpayers is great, but he said what the planning board does is really important and it needs the money to make sure it can do a good job and protect taxpayers from a bad decision. He suggested keeping the budget the same as last year.
Mrs. Stevenson said $1,900 was a small amount in the whole town budget and cutting that amount would not have a meaningful impact on the tax rate. She thought the budget should stay the same as 2019 in case a big project comes up and the planning board needs it.
Mr. McGrath said it would be good to have more professional training during the coming year and Mr. Bruno recommended adding $200 more to that fund for training with professional planner Tara Bamford.
Chairman Stevenson said he thought $250 more was needed for the advertising budget.
After some additional discussion it was proposed to cut the budget by $870.
Peter Roy made a motion to adopt that change and approve the 2020 budget. Mr. McGrath seconded the motion.
The motion passed 6-1 with Mr. Jensen voting no.
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Chris McGrath made a motion to accept the November 11, 2019 minutes as amended. Mrs. Stevenson seconded the motion and it passed 6-1 with Mr. Roy abstaining.
Mrs. Stevenson made a motion to adjourn and Peter Roy seconded. It passed 7-0.
Next meeting December 11, 2019.
The meeting adjourned at 8:30.
Respectfully submitted
Debbie Bayley
Planning/Zoning Clerk