

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
Planning Board Meeting
January 10, 2024
Minutes

Present: Anthony Rodrigues, Mike Bruno, Martie Cook, Alecia Loveless, Sean Gawlick, Jerry Blanchard and Kevin Roy

Absent: Linda Moore

Anthony Rodrigues opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:00 pm and appointed Jerry Blanchard as a full voting member.

Francis and Maryann Hebb are present to discuss a conceptual idea for a wedding venue at their property located at 933 River Rd, Lot 209 Map 59.

Martie Cook asked questions about what the set-up would be. Mr. Hebb responded that the weddings would take place under a tent in the large field. Caterers would supply all the food and beverages, and portable toilets would be placed on the property as well.

Martie also inquired about capacity, to which Mr. Hebb replied they would like to keep the capacity at around 100 as that seemed to work for the two family weddings they hosted this summer. Martie asked if there was parking for 75 cars, which would be required for the site plan review process. Mr. Hebb assured the Board that the fields were large enough to accommodate well over 75 cars.

Jerry Blanchard inquired about the barn on the property and wanted to know if the Hebb's planned on using it for weddings. Mr. Hebb stated the barn was in much disrepair and there were no plans to use it for weddings.

Anthony Rodrigues informs the Hebb's the next phase would be to present an application for site plan review to the planning office.

Mike Bruno suggests that, because there are no structures, this project may be exempt from site plan review. He recommends Hebb's come back for a second conceptual with plans and letters of support from his abutters.

Martie Cook motions to re-open the minutes from 10/25/23 to make amendments. Jerry Blanchard seconded the motion which passed 7-0.

Martie is requesting to make a change on page 3 by replacing *"Martie would also like to add that there are some new uses being added and would like verbiage added regarding the fire code for each use,"* with, *"Martie believes the intent is to align with the fire code."*

Jerry motions to accept the changes to the October 25th minutes. Alecia seconded; motion carries 7-0.

The Board reviews the minutes from 11/29/23.

Martie motions to approve the minutes from 11/29/23. Alecia seconded; motion passes 7-0

The Board reviews the minutes from 12/13/23.

Alecia motions to approve the minutes from 12/12/23. Jerry seconded; motion passes 5-0. Mike and Kevin abstain due to absence.

Mary Moritz, Town Administrator, is before the board to discuss the Warrant Articles for the March vote.

Mary felt the descriptor for Amendment 6 lacked some key information regarding access, parking, septic, water supply and code compliance requirements prior to the issuance of a Zoning Permit for a Short-Term Rental. She contacted Tara Bamford to inquire about making some changes and presented those to the Board. The new descriptor makes Amendment 6 clearer to the voters.

Mary also informed the Board that she sent the proposed warrant articles to Town Council for review to make sure there weren't any legal issues. Attorney Laura Spector-Morgan cleaned up the warrant articles by eliminating unnecessary words. She explained the changes don't change the intent of any of the warrants.

Mike Bruno feels the changes make it easier to understand and commends the work done. He questions if the Board is allowed to make these changes because this isn't what was voted on. Mary explains that because only the descriptor is being changed the board can move forward with the attorney's version if they want.

Mary informs the Board she has until January 29th to finalize the warrants, so, if the Planning Board wants to take some time to review, they can.

Mike would like to take a vote tonight.

Jerry motions to accept the attorney's version of the warrant article descriptors. Sean Gawlik seconds the motion, and a discussion ensues.

Mike is concerned that Amendment 6 is not in line with what the Board first discussed regarding STR. The intent was to have something in place that would notice abutters of STR, but he sees nothing that supports that.

*(Amended 1/24/24) Martie suggests that should be added next year, **because the way it is defined, they will be coming in for conceptual and if we need it to go to a minor site plan review, we can ask for that. The intent being it is not a requirement, but it still allows for neighbor notification on a case-by-case basis.***

The discussion moves to the topic of permitting and the question is asked who in the town is responsible for that process. Amendment 6 clearly states it falls on the building inspector.

The question is asked what form an applicant will fill out for the permitting process. Currently there is nothing in place.

Mike raises a concern regarding the additional costs to the Code Officer's budget and informs the board that the budget has already increased this year because the Code Officer is so busy. Sean comments that if the town's inspector is too busy the State will inspect properties.

Alecia Loveless seconds Jerry Blanchard's motion to move the attorney's version of the warrants forward. Motion passed 7-0.

Jerry Blanchard motions to adjourn the meeting at 7:20. Anthony Rodrigues seconded; meeting adjourned 7-0.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Ferringo, Planning and Zoning Clerk