

## Town of Litchfield

### Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 2, 2015

**Location:** Litchfield Town Office

**Present:** Dan Craft (Chairman), Paul Hempstead (Vice Chair), Lorimar "Skip" Trafton, Mike Seaman, Deborah M. Campbell (Secretary)

**Excused Absences:** Joe Campbell, Judy Bishop, Jeff Flaherty, Steve Ochmanski (Code Enforcement Officer)

**General Public Audience:** George Rogers (Litchfield Historical Society), Judy Rogers (Litchfield Historical Society), Rayna Leibowitz (Litchfield Historic Preservation Commission)

**Item 1: Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairman Dan Craft.

**Item 2: Consideration of Minutes**

**2.1 March 5, 2015 minutes**

**MOTION:** A Motion was made by Paul to accept the March 5, 2015 minutes as presented. Skip seconded the Motion.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE:** 4-0-0

**Item 3: Agenda Additions/Adjustments**

There were no agenda additions/adjustments.

**Item 4: Scheduled Business**

**4.1 Response by Litchfield Historic Preservation Commission to letter from Planning Board, dated March 12, 2015.** (copy attached)

Dan thanked the Litchfield Historic Preservation Commission (Commission) and the Litchfield Historical Society (Society) representatives for attending the meeting. He confirmed that they had seen the March 12, 2015 letter.

## Final and Approved

Discussion followed about ways the Commission and Society can help the Planning Board in creating a neighborhood architectural standard for commercial development in a village district.

Rayna asked if this was required before the upcoming June 2015 town meeting. Dan responded that it was not; however, it might be good to have a poll asking for suggestions to hand out at the town meeting.

Dan asked whether it might apply to Planned Development Districts as well. Mike asked where the Planned Development Districts were, and Rayna pointed them out on the Land Use District Map on the east wall of the room. She also pointed out the Village Districts and the Planned Development Districts. Mike added that he would want to read the Comprehensive Plan again. Rayna explained that the Commission can help regarding historic buildings, and this would not apply to Planned Development Districts. She noted one would not look for it there. She preferred something for a Village District. She did not see a need for architecture elements in a Rural District.

George explained that Historical Preservation Districts are represented. He added that there are relatively few historic buildings left in Litchfield. This would require a rewrite of the ordinance. To protect historic buildings, they would be put in a certain zone. He added it is not possible to put a Historic District in Litchfield. He believed it was better to use the Land Use Ordinance (LUO).

Mike explained that if a performance standard was passed, it would give the planning board and the Historical Society some overview controls. Rayna noted the neighborhood standard on p. 19 of the LUO.

Paul asked if the Village Districts are big enough to establish a character to have the architecture points needed. Rayna responded that the Village District has enough to warrant anything being added to have architectural elements that are consistent with the historic area there. Not all buildings in all three districts are historic, town should be sure that what is added is not detrimental.

Mike stated that the standard should be a Performance Standard. He suggested it could be based on structures over 3,000 SF; under 3,000 SF, or all new structures.

George added this would have to be ready for the 2016 town meeting. Judy noted that townspeople are now aware of the situation due to the Dollar General arriving. Mike added this gave the group more time to socialize and get participation from townspeople. Mike stressed that there was a need for some latitude in the Standard to review proposals and give feedback. There was a need to indicate that the town wanted something that would blend in with its surroundings.

Judy asked about landscaping. Mike and Dan responded there is something in the standard, but its impact is minimal. We need more definition for Planning Board control. This would include landscaping, screening, architectural points.

Paul asked about using a point system.

## Final and Approved

Mike asked if the Planning Board had an architectural standard, would it be practical for the Commission to review an application so that the Commission could ensure that the application meets the intent of the Commission. Mark asked if the Commission makes input during the process. Mike answered that it does, and the Planning Board asks if it meets their ordinance.

Rayna noted there is no architectural background represented on the Commission. Mike noted the need to come up with definitions acceptable to the town. This discussion included whether it was for new commercial construction, or nonresidential construction such as a garage. Dan mentioned wording used in the Manchester and Ogunquit requirements. George observed that using the idea of blending in—rather than being too specific—would seem to be acceptable to townspeople. Paul added that commercial developers would need something specific enough to go by. Mike asked if KVCOG could help. Rayna noted there may be communities outside Kennebec County as well. She suggested that a first step might be to use the Sodalite to invite townspeople to submit ideas. Mike added there was a need to be specific in that request. Dan added it needed to be made clear what we need.

George suggested using a short survey asking can the Planning Board control the architecture standard for commercial development in the Village District. Mike asked whether this control should it be extended to other building types. He wondered about vegetation height and landscaping, and noted that screening is limited.

Judy asked about using the term “nonresidential.” Rayna asked how that impacts building a garage. Mike asked about the impact on the tables on p. 19 of the LUO, and asked what needed to be defined within the Village District. He noted that the way in which the performance standard is written is what the Planning Board has control over. He noted the polls are open in June and November as a way to reach townspeople. Judy noted there is a big difference when questions are not about homes. Paul added that a minimum in the ordinance is a requirement to blend in. Mark added that it should not be prohibitive. Mike agreed that the intent is to impact not prohibit.

Mike stressed that having a third party working on the drafting and socializing part is helpful. The Planning Board is legislative so having a disinterested party such as the Commission apart from the Planning Board process working on this is good.

At 6:30 p.m. Rayna, George, and Judy departed the meeting.

### **4.2 Litchfield Land Use Ordinance updates**

No discussion at this time.

### **Agenda Item 5. Unscheduled Business**

**5.1** Dan and Skip attended their respective seminars and found them to be informative.

### **Agenda Item 6. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence to discuss.

**Agenda Item 7. Future Agenda Items**

The next meeting was tentatively set for Thursday, May 7, 2015. Skip will be out of town on that date. Mike will be here. Dan noted that the meeting will be postponed if necessary.

The return to a summer schedule was discussed. That would mean no meetings in June, July, and August unless something is submitted for review.

Mike suggested reviewing the Comprehensive Plan in September to see what impacts there might be on town ordinances. He added that information for the Architectural Standard should be available for discussion by then.

**Agenda Item 7. Adjourn meeting**

**MOTION:** A Motion was made by Dan to adjourn. Mike seconded the Motion.

**DISCUSSION:** None.

**VOTE:** 4-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m. by Dan.