



PLANNING BOARD
TOWN OF EAST KINGSTON
New Hampshire

2010-2011
David F. Sullivan, Chairman
Ron Morales, Vice Chairman

MINUTES
Regular Meeting 15 April 2010
7:00 pm

AGENDA:

- ◆ **Call to Order**
- ◆ **Approval** of March 18 minutes
- ◆ **Election** of Officers
- ◆ **Review** of reworked Plan NH Report
- ◆ **Board Business**

CALL TO ORDER: The regular meeting of the East Kingston Planning Board was called to order at 7:05PM.

ROLL CALL: Mrs. White called the roll.

Members: Dr. RA Marston, Mr. R Morales, Mr. D Sullivan, Mr. E Warren, and Mr. D Pendell, ex-officio.

Alternates: Mr. P. Gilligan. Mr. R. Forrest and Mr. J. Cacciatore were not in attendance.

Advisors Present: RPC Planner, Ms. Julie LaBranche.

Also Present: Gary Hinz, East Kingston resident.

Board Business

The first item on the agenda was to approve the minutes of March 18. There were no changes offered. Mr. Sullivan asked for a motion for approval.

MOTION: Mr. Pendell **MOVED** to accept the minutes of March 18 as presented. Mr. Morales seconded. The motion was unanimous.

Election of Officers

Mr. Sullivan asked for nominations from the Board for Chairman and Vice Chairman.

MOTION: Mr. Morales **MOVED** to nominate David Sullivan as Chairman. Dr. Marston seconded. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION: Dr. Marston **MOVED** to nominate Ron Morales as Vice Chairman. Mr. Pendell seconded. The vote was unanimous.

For 2010-2011, the Chairman will be David Sullivan and the Vice Chairman will be Ron Morales.

Mr. Sullivan thanked Mr. Warren for his service in the position as Vice Chairman.

Review of the Reworked Plan NH Report

Mrs. White reminded that Board they had wanted to compare the original report to the version she had reformatted and speak on that. She also noted that a new version of the report had not yet been received from Mr. Castagna, so they could not discuss that. The Board decided to wait to have the discussion until they received the revised report from Mr. Castagna.

Discussion

Since they had no Public Hearings scheduled for tonight, Mrs. White had suggested they use this meeting as a work meeting, eliminating the necessity of scheduling a separate work session for this month. She had already distributed the work schedule meeting dates to the Board.

Mrs. White asked if perhaps part of the solution to the goal of the Board would be met by playing up the Town Center District and getting some activity to happen there first. That might have a springboard effect for citizens to want to extend the Town Center District, or rezoning the section of 108 from Freeman Street to North Road (Carmen's) as commercial. Mr. Morales acknowledged that perhaps most of the people who live within the Town Center District do not really know what their options might be and it would be a good idea to get the information out there.

Mrs. White noted that the Board had wanted to discuss what types of business they might want to see in Town and how they might attract them to want to be here. Only a large bog-box operation would actually lower the tax base, so maybe the next best thing would be to keep the money in the Town by offering services locally. That would not help to lower the tax rate, but would be a benefit to the Town. It was discussed that any businesses would need to be something that would get people to stop, as use by the locals only would not sustain most types of stand-alone businesses.

Since what came out of Plan NH was the fact that East Kingston's major industry was farming (agriculture), Mr. Morales started the Board on a lengthy discussion of playing up farming and agriculture in the Town with suggestions of community gardens (both flowers and vegetables), farmers renting out land they are not using for others to be able to have a garden, and the possibility of farmer's markets and where they could be held.

Farmer's markets would need to be held somewhere there was space available for parking, and there would need to be other types of things available for a diverse selection to entice people to stop and shop. Having it at the school was discussed, as there is the multi-purpose room inside for a winter market, and plenty of parking for both the winter market and a outside summer market. Also, the ball fields were not used after June and had parking there and across the street; that might be an option. It would also be a good thing to alternate any farmer's market with another Town so patrons are kept interested to attend in both places and they would not competing with each other. Mr. Gilligan opined it would help the economy by eliminating transportation for foreign produce and the local people would have fresher produce.

Mr. Morales stated that if something was advertised as "*certified organic*", it would need to meet certain criteria to qualify meaning the land and the seed both would need to be certified by the State. You could advertise as "*organically grown*" if you utilized organic practices such as natural compost, no sprays, etc. Dr. Marston reported his weekly Market Farm Bureau newsletter said it is up to the Inspector General to make sure there are no pesticides in organic food; however, there is no department that tests for it.

Mr. Morales noted that an Agricultural Committee would be the first step to get people interested, and give them the network to work with other communities so they don't try to "*reinvent the wheel*". He felt the communities with established Agricultural Committees were open to helping other towns.

It was noted that any type of community garden would need to have accessibility to water and have someone be responsible to till the land. Discussion ensued in regard to where around Town this might happen and if there was any Town-owned conservation land that might work.

Some places discussed for a flower garden were in front of the library, at the ball fields, and in front of the Town Office. A "Garden Club" would be responsible for watering, weeding and maintaining the garden. The Board noted that community gardens and farmer's markets were good social events.

Mr. Hinz asked if this discussion was part of the review of the Plan NH report. Mrs. White interjected it was not; that had been put on hold since the revised report had not been received from Mr. Castagna. They were discussing an Agricultural Committee.

Mr. Hinz asked if having a garden in front of the Town Office would raise taxes. Mr. Morales noted they were discussing ways to utilize the resources in Town to leverage their strengths; a strong emphasis on agriculture was one of the things that had come out of the charette. East Kingston does not have any industry; they are a farm-based community. Farmer's markets and community gardens would help cultivate what they already have rather than trying to bring something in.

Mr. Hinz asked wasn't the intention of the charette to lower the tax base? Mr. Morales answered it was; but to start, they were trying to think of ways to market what they have to bring people into the Town to spend their money.

Mr. Warren thought the reason for the mini-charette was because there were several people who had come to the Board for businesses that were outside of the scope of the ordinance for a home occupation and would have fit better into the commercial zone. They had wanted to find out what type of businesses the residents would want in Town and where they would want them to be located, if at all. He did not see how a farmer's market would help lower the tax base at all.

Mr. Gilligan answered that it would enable the farmers to stay on the land and not sell the property to a developer who would bring in a number of houses that would impact the school and Town services. Mr. Morales noted that on residential land, for every dollar collected, you need to spend \$1.18 for services. For land used for farming, for every \$1.00 collected, it only costs \$.50 to maintain it.

Mr. Warren referred to the book by Peter Francese "*Communities and Consequences*". It states that an empty field will cost more than a house on a lot. Mr. Morales stated Mr. Francese was wrong, and that he has an agenda. His thought is that workforce housing will solve every problem, which is not the case. Across the United States, depending on the ratio where you live, there is not one community where if you build a house, you make more money than if it were farmland.

It appears that people move to Town because of the rural setting, but once they get there they want to close the gates for anyone else to come. Mr. Warren did not feel right about putting in a farm stand to prevent someone from building a house. Mr. Morales agreed; and said that was not what they were trying to do; they were trying to find ways to *preserve* the farming they have.

Mr. Warren observed that most people in Town have enough land to have a garden large enough to sustain them. He thought it would be more beneficial to educate people to have their own gardens than to create a community garden. Mr. Morales opined that the benefit of a community garden was that not everyone does have that amount of land. People living in the over-55 communities don't have land for a garden. Perhaps someone wants a garden but does not want to have to till their own land, or rent a tiller, or have a way to get a tiller home if they did want to rent it. In a community garden, that would all be taken care of for you.

Mr. Warren opined that could not be called gardening then; Mr. Morales noted they would be "*Gentlemen Farmers*". Mr. Gilligan also noted that it would be a meeting place for people to talk to each other.

Mr. Castagna had noted that small towns tended to spread out, and in the last decade, people realized they had done away with the center of Town. Mr. Warren opined that the moving of both the Post Office and the Police Station from the center of Town had not been a good thing in the long run. Mr. Sullivan offered that at the time, it was the only viable place in town to put it. Mr. Gilligan stated that in other towns where all the municipal services are near the same area, the businesses in the area benefit from the traffic coming in to use those services.

Mr. Pendell noted that the Board had tried to rush things and decide they needed more commercial space; it appears they need to pull back and do some more research. He does not think they got their answer from the mini-charette. They need to discuss the subject some more and put together something to put on the ballot and ask the people if they would like to offer more opportunities for businesses to grow in East Kingston by making some more commercial zoning and where they would like to see that happen.

Mr. Hinz asked why they would want to increase the commercial zone if it would take a large business to make a difference in the tax rate? Mr. Morales answered that although businesses pay the same tax rate as everyone, they are accessed differently and pay more taxes.

Mr. Warren inquired if they asked for an expanded commercial zone in order to get more businesses in, and those businesses paid the same as if a person was living on the property, wouldn't they be misleading the residents? Mr. Morales noted that anything other than a residence would be positive cash flow. Services would be less than a residence because the fire, police and school would not need to be expended.

They would need to be able to explain to the people how a business could generate more in tax money than a residence, and how services would cost less. We could suggest where we think potential lies, and ask the residents what types of businesses they want to see go in there.

It was noted that Stratham appeared to have a great plan to encourage business. Mr. Pendell offered to ask someone to come and talk to the Board about how they got started.

Ms. LaBranche suggested finding out the value of commercially zoned property versus residential property. An economic evaluation and a traffic analysis would be good to have. As a result, it could entail creating new zones and enhancing the existing zones. RECD (Rockingham Economic Development Corporation) has all sorts of planning tools for economic development. Community surveys are also useful tools. You need to assess what data you need, and who are the partners you need to re-evaluate zoning,

RPC has a new grant program through the transportation fund which would do most of the things you need to know; it is an 80/20 grant. Not including writing zoning changes, it could be between \$5,000-\$8,000 with East Kingston paying 20%. It could be another \$5,000 to write the zoning piece. Payment could be arranged 50% at the start and the remaining 50% at the end. Mr. Sullivan will check to see if there is money in the budget for this.

Mr. Gilligan suggested a town water system, as water and sewerage is very important in attracting larger businesses. Ms. LaBranche noted it was very expensive to put one in, and there was never a guarantee that you will recoup your investment. A more logical step would be to look at the zoning and adjust it as necessary. A tax incentive district could be created and the developer would be responsible for bearing the cost of installing a community well.

You need to decide where you would like to see land preserved to protect the resources, and areas where it is less desirable to do so. You would identify on a map where those resources are and go from there. You can increase lot size or require cluster subdivisions in areas you want to preserve and you can reduce the lot size and increase the density in areas where you want to promote growth.

In answer to the question where we could obtain a groundwater survey, Ms. LaBranche stated that although there is no way to project specific groundwater yield, USGS has a groundwater study that came out in 2009 which estimates the amount of yield based on well data in the region. Wells are having to be drilled deeper than ever to reach water.

Ms. LaBranche will develop a scope of work so the Board knows what they need to do and in what order. Then they will ask REDC to look it over. Mr. Gilligan will work with Ms. LaBranche on this. The Board also wants surveys to be sent out to the residents to find out what they want.

Report on the Economy

Mr. Gilligan noted that East Kingston does not have a scale of economy because they so small. School demographics are going down. Mr. Pendell verified that in the last two years, kindergarten populations have declined to the point that where there had been two classes, there was now only one class with less children than what used to be in each of the two classes. There had been talk of combining all six elementary schools to eliminate redundancy and to get the economy back, but nothing has happened as of yet.

Right now, towns are delivering a smaller basket of municipal services for a larger cost. If things could be done regionally instead of individually, towns could save a lot of money, but it would mean giving up local control.

As things are now, larger tracts of land are required for house lots and that, in turn, keeps the school costs down. Land itself is quite expensive. The younger generation is being educated in NH, and then moving to other states because they have a difficult time finding housing. There needs to be a way to encourage the younger people to stay to take the place of the graying population. Cluster developments are good because they preserve open space without blocking anyone out. Forcing farmers away is not a good thing, but driving the price of land up so high that no one can afford it is bad too.

PSNH Letter/Information Discussion

Mrs. White explained she had contacted PSNH regarding Mr. Pendell's suggestion the encroachment procedures be put up on the website. She spoke to Russell Maille from PSNH and asked if they had a copy they could send via e-mail to be included on the Town website. He said he did not know and would research it and get back to her; he had concerns regarding updated versions of the document. Mrs. White then called him back and suggested they provide a link to post on the Town website and anyone interested could link right to PSNH's website which would always have the updated information.

Mr. Maille reported back that PSNH did not have a version of the procedures on-line, and PSNH had no policy to allow anyone to link to their website. PSNH also did not want us to scan the information for inclusion on the Town website. Therefore, it would need to be the responsibility of the Building Inspector to provide a copy of the procedures for any activity happening on properties on which there was an easement.

May Meeting

Mrs. White reported there are potentially two people coming in for home occupations; one artist and one beautician.

OEP Conference

Mrs. White noted four people would be going to the OEP Conference and Mr. Sullivan had offered to drive. Mr. Morales, Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Gilligan and Mrs. White would all meet at the Town offices parking lot at 7:00 am on May 8 and carpool to Nashua. Mrs. White had contacted the Police Department to let them know their cars would be parked in the lot so there would be no problems or questions as to why they were there.

PREP Update

Ms. LaBranche reported that the PREP Program ended with a presentation at the library on March 30. There is also a brochure that Ms. LaBranche produced which was handed out to everyone. Signs will be going up within the next month, and the newsletter has gotten good comments and feedback so far. PREP thought the project was very successful and was pleased with the products that were produced. The Board gave Ms. LaBranche a round of applause for all her hard work on this project.

MOTION: Dr. Marston **MOVED** the Planning Board adjourn. Mr. Morales seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Sullivan closed the meeting at 8:50 pm.

HANDOUTS TO THE BOARD

- Business Park suggestions from Mr. Gilligan
- 3/50 Project information
- Selectmen's Meeting Minutes -March 31

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara White

Barbara A. White
Recording Secretary

David Sullivan
Chairman

Minutes approved _____