

Shaftsbury Planning Commission

April 12, 2022

Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:05 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Martha Cornwell, Naomi Miller, and, via phone, Mike Foley. Zoning administrator Shelly Stiles was also present.

Minutes

Ms. Miller moved to approve the February 22 minutes. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-1, with Mr. Williams abstaining.

Tiny houses

At the last meeting, commissioners wondered whether tiny houses (meeting all state wastewater and potable water regulations) might be a way to provide affordable housing. Research shared by Ms. Stiles suggested they might not, as the cost of meeting state requirements might make them too expensive or, conversely, a poorer investment than a modular.

Ms. Miller wondered whether the bylaw might simply mention them as an option (since Shaftsbury has no minimum square footage for a primary residence, they are already allowed). Perhaps a small subset of landowners would find them appealing if they knew about them.

Mr. Williams pointed out that cluster subdivisions serve to promote tiny house communities. But, he noted, Shires Housing tried to rebuild a Pownal trailer park years ago (with public sewer and water), but just couldn't make it work financially. A used house trailer remained a better option financially. Ms. Miller wondered whether tiny house baseline costs such as electrical connections and foundations might be lower than those for the houses envisioned for the Shires development in Pownal. Mr. Williams said a "Vermod" house, an energy efficient unit resembling a house trailer, costs \$100K-\$160K installed.

Mr. Foley said he thought the best answer in the short term was promoting accessory dwellings, variously defined.

The discussion was continued to the next meeting.

Bylaw revisions re affordable housing

The commission revisited Mr. Williams's earlier memo in which he suggested for discussion changes to the maximum lot coverage and minimum frontage requirements. It was noted that the VC maximum is 70% of the lot area, when next to that zone the VR maximum is 40%. Would making the VR maximum 70% be feasible? Could septic be built?

Mr. Williams reminded the commission that, many years ago, the PC explored enlarging the VR zone to incorporate more of the Twitchell Hill area, a region south of the Village, and an area east of Cole Hall stretching toward Howard Park. A discussion of this possibility was continued to the next meeting.

Representative to ARPA committee

Ms. Cornwell reported that a committee to seek public input on how to spend ARPA funds is being created. It will consist of one selectperson, one planning commissioner, one representative each from the business and non-profit communities, and an at-large member. Mr. Williams moved to nominate Ms. Miller to the committee. Mr. Foley seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0. As an aside, Mr. Williams said he supported spending some but not all of the funds on the restoration of Cole Hall and its surroundings.

Other business

Commissioners reassured Mr. Williams that on the March ballot the bylaw revisions were lumped in one up or down vote by mistake. It will not happen again.

Ms. Cornwell moved that the boundary line adjustment appeals period should be 15 days and that only parties to the adjustment could appeal. Mr. Foley seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0. It will become a zoning policy.

Mr. Foley said he'd be glad to be a website contact for questions about Efficiency Vermont but didn't want to star in videos about it.

Mr. Williams moved to adjourn at 7:20. Ms. Miller seconded the motion.