

Walpole Planning Board
January 9, 2018
Town Hall
7 pm

Present: Chair Jeff Miller, Co-chair Robert Miller, James Aldrich secretary, Jason Perron, Dennis Marcom, Jeff White, Cheryl Mayberry, Selectboard Representative. Alternate: Joanna Andros. Absent: Ed Potter.

Recording: Marilou Blaine. These minutes are unapproved and will be reviewed at the regular February 2018 meeting for corrections, additions and/or omissions.

Roll Call: Mr. J. Aldrich called the meeting to order at 7 pm. All board members were present so no alternate was needed to fill in.

Minutes:

Correction: In the December minutes an email that was cited by Selectboard Chair Peggy Pschirrer sent to Selectboard member Steve Dalessio was inappropriately mentioned in reference to the discussion the Board was having about an amendment to the Zoning Ordinances. While Ms Pschirrer sent the email, she wrote in another email to the secretary that it had “absolutely nothing to do with the subject under discussion” in the December meeting. Also a correction on page 1 should change Joanna Miller to Joanna Andros.

A motion by Mr. R. Miller was made to accept the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded and approved by the entire Board.

Old Business:

Public Hearing: No 1. Liberty Utilities. Cutting on scenic road. Farnum Road. Jeff Carney spokesperson. Statute 231-158.

Mr. Carney, Program Manager Vegetation and Inspections for Liberty Utilities, sent a letter to the Planning Board outlining what his team was going to do on Farnum Road, which is a designated scenic road. The scheduled maintenance follows Public Utilities Commission (PUC): 307.10 Pruning Standards.

Mr. Carney said that under the Statute 300.1 the PUC has made changes so that all utility companies are now mandated to follow the same regime for pruning near utility areas. The main changes are in minimum for clearances and cutting has changed from a four-year cycle from a five-year cycle. Liberty Utilities has 900 miles of regular maintenance.

The Commission shortened the cutting cycle by a year and tried to achieve greater clearances, Carney said. It is called called the 300 rule for the electric side of PUC. PUC never had a rule about clearances. The Commission used to let every company decide what the clearances would be. But over the last couple of years it's been difficult, especially for communities that have more than one supplier that have widely different standards for clearance.

So PUC passed this 307.10 rule that requires specific clearances for cutting overhead, on the side and underneath the wires. At the same time PUC recognizes that on designated scenic roads a company isn't going to get exactly the same amount of clearance. The Commission also recognized that a property owner may restrict the amount of pruning and that customers could refuse permission to cut anything on their property.

So in order to get to what the PUC asks the plan is to look at the size of the tree, its structure, how much room there is to work with, or lack of room, and the changes since the last time cutting took place. There is also a lot of branch reduction.

Also utility companies are using contracted foresters to inspect the work and make recommendations and sometimes the forester does the work.

Previously Liberty Utilities had different clearances for different areas, such as rural areas or if in front of someone's house. Now there is one standard.

Mr. Marcom asked about the clearance standards now.

Mr. Carney said it is 15 feet overhead, 8 feet from the side and 10 feet underneath.

In talking about maintenance Mr. Carney said it's important not to defer maintenance. If you do, you lose your clearances and it takes more time and money to get it back to the way it was.

In a previous letter, Mr. Carney had presented a plan for Farnum Road and he said he was at the meeting to get approval from the Board.

The pruning plan was:

“10 feet from conductors.

“8 feet to the side of the nearest conductor and 15 feet above the conductors, at time of pruning.

“Utilities shall implement measures such as mid-cycle reviews to identify and mitigate elevated risk from tree exposure on circuits or sections of circuits that are significantly and/or continually experiencing tree-related interruptions, where it is practical to do so.

“Utilities shall not be required to prune to the clearance standards specified in (a) of this section where:

The landowner has refused or restricted permission to prune.

A municipality or other local governing body, by ordinance or other official means, has refused or restricted permission to prune; or

Pruning to the standards specified in subpart (a) would be detrimental to the health of the tree, in which the utility shall adhere to the guidelines provided in ANSI a300 Part 1 – 2008 Edition, available as noted in Appendix B.

“Trees under the 15-inch circumference limit and brush capable of growing into the energized conducts will be cut with the landowner's consent.

“Tree to be removed, based on risk assessment performed by Liberty Utilities and qualified foresters from Environmental Consultant, Inc (EDI) have been marked with red or pink flagging stapled to the trees. Removals are noted in the enclosed details as “Rvm and Diameter Class” by land type Unmaintained (UM) Roadside (R) and (M) Maintained.”\

There being no other questions, Mr. J. Miller closed the Public Hearing. Mr. Perron made a motion to approve the cutting on Farnum Road and Mr. R. Miller seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the rest of the Board.

Public Hearing No. 2. Zoning Ordinance Amendment

The town will vote on the following article in March. The Board will vote to recommend or not recommend the amendment the article be placed on the warrant.

Article IV General Provisions

Add Section N

Authority to assign section numbers. The Planning Board has the authority to assign such section numbers to the Zoning Ordinance as it may deem appropriate provided that no substantive change to the ordinance shall occur as a result of this renumbering.

The purpose of this warrant article is to allow the Planning Board to make small corrections to current ordinances when there is no change in the intent of the ordinance.

Mr. Marcom asked if the Selectboard has the authority to name new streets according to E911, does it have to be in the ordinance. Mr. Miller said no that the Selectboard already has the power to name new streets. However, if the article passes, Selectmen can decide to change a street name that is currently mentioned in the zoning ordinances without the Planning Board going to the town.

Mr. Marcom noticed that in the Zoning Ordinances, which was updated in March 2016, the letter N was used to add an ordinance for recycling and transfer stations. Therefore, this article will now be called Section O.

Mr. Marcom made a motion to recommend passage of the change to the Zoning Ordinances. Mr. Aldrich seconded the motion and board agreed unanimously.

New Business

Surveyor Joe DiBernardo requested two Public Hearings for February, each for a two-lot subdivision.

Sam McNeil Talmadge, 211 North Road, Map 10, Lot 24-2, rural/agricultural. One lot 18.8 acres, Lot 2 is 7 acres that is L-shaped. Lot 1 road frontage 762.99 feet, Lot 2 292.26 feet.

Greg Macri, 10 Macri Lane, Map 7, Lot 20, Residential. Lot 1 9.89 acres, Lot 2 3 acres. it's the lower field in front of his house. Road frontage Lot 1 465.91, Lot 2 289.89. This subdivision requires state permitting, which is underway.

Mr. Aldrich made a motion to hold the Public Hearings next month. Mr. R. Miller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Complete Streets Update

Mr. J. Miller met with the Selectboard to discuss the recommendations made by the Board at the last meeting. He said that the Selectboard was very warm to several of the projects the Board recommended and that the town can do the work including painting a sidewalk around Jake's, signage at the library crosswalk, painting of the arrows around the fountain and sharrows on the road for bicycle traffic.

He also noted that the Southwest Regional Planning Commission received \$100,000 from a donor for a grant for towns who had completed the Complete Street projects. After a talk with Mari Brunner of SWPC, Miller said the project for a walkway from the school to the fire station probably would not qualify because it would be way over the cost.

She suggested another way to proceed was by going to another organization for seed money because in order for the Board to proceed on this project, there must be a preliminary engineering study. Also, it must be known how wide an area does the town already own already and if there isn't enough land to widen the shoulder, do you ask an abutter for 10 feet of land.

The walkway would be on one side of the road, probably the Hubbard side. It may not be a sidewalk but a wide shoulder marked for safety. After you get to the Mill Pond from the school it becomes quiet narrow and any property above that would probably need a retaining wall, which would cost quite a bit of money.

Ms. Mayberry said the town could apply for a transportation grant in which the town has to put up 20 percent of the money. Mayberry also said that the town would not be asking the highway department to do the project and even if it cost a lot of money, the town would only be responsible for 20 percent.

If it's to enhance Complete Streets, we could get letters of support from other people, Ms. Mayberry said. Mr. Miller said Mari Brunner was offering ways to find assistance.

Mr. Miller said he might get in touch with Mike Rau and he might know how wide the right of way is and the highway department might have lots of information about that area. Mr. Rau might be able to put some rough estimate together about what were thinking about. In order for this to go through, the price tag has to be low, Mr. Miller said .

Ms. Mayberry said that's true but you had to remember the town would only be paying 20 percent of the total cost.

Mr. Marcom said the road and shoulder area by Hubbard already is in terrible shape and needs repair anyway so maybe there's money in the budget for road repair in that area and the two projects could be done together. There are holes there and you notice it if you're riding a bike, Marcom said.

Last month, Ms. Mayberry recommended that to keep townspeople aware of Complete Streets it might become some part of the site plan. It should be a consideration in the application, she said. It may not apply to all projects but people should be aware of it on the checklist and the Board could ask questions if there were any sort of impact on the ideas of Complete Streets.

This will be a matter to discuss at the next Board meeting, Mr. Miller said. Any kind of amendment to the site plan review, the Board can do that with just a Public Hearing. It doesn't need a town vote.

Integrating Complete Streets into the Site Plan Review will be a topic of discussion at the February meeting.

Hazardous Mitigation Committee: Mr. R. Miller has volunteered to represent the Planning at the meetings of the Hazardous Mitigation Committee for the year 2018. The Committee meets four times a year at the fire station.

Mr. Aldrich made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Marcom seconded the motion and it was passed by the rest of the Board.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilou Blaine
Secretary

There will be no workshop this month.

Next regular meeting Tuesday, February Nov. 13, 2018

cc: WPB, ZBA Selectboard, NW Commissioners, Town Offices, Walpolean.

Minutes posted: Town Hall Lobby, Outside bulletin board of Walpole Grocery, Walpolean and town web site www.walpolenh.us.com.