

**Walpole Planning Board**  
**Tuesday, February 13, 2024**  
**Town Hall**  
**7 pm**

**Roll Call:** Board members Chair Jeff Miller, Clerk Jason Perron, Joanna Andros, Trevor MacLachlan, Select Board Representative Steve Dalessio. Alternate Bill Carmody. Absent: Vice-Chair Dennis Marcom, board member Jeff Harrington and alternate Travis Adams. A quorum was present.

Also at the meeting were a group representing the Walpole Fire Department: Commissioner Tom Sawyer, Retired Chief Dick Hurlburt, Retired Chief Harry Boynton, Assistant Chief Mike Flynn, Steve Horton Construction Services and the presenter Fire Chief Mark Houghton.

**Call to Order:** Mr. Miller called the meeting to order a couple of minutes before 7 pm. He asked Mr. Carmody to sit in for Vice-Chair Dennis Marcom.

**Minutes:** Mr. MacLachlan moved to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Perron seconded the motion and the motion carried.

**New Business:**

**Fire Chief Mark Houghton** will present the Walpole Fire Department's renovations and additions to the public. Main Street, Tax Map 24, Lot 38-1.

Fire Chief Mark Houghton introduced the fire commissioners and past fire chiefs as well as Steve Horton, who was instrumental in putting the plan and costs together. Mr. Houghton passed out a handout to the Planning Board members, as well as the public. The handout gave an overview of the project, some renovations as well as new additions and the reasons why they were needed, and a proposed budget.

Mr. Houghton said the last time the Walpole Firehouse was renovated was 1990. At that time the call volume was about 54 calls a year. Last year, he said, the department had 753 calls. Eighty percent of those calls were for Emergency Medical Service. Twenty percent were for fire. The renovations planned are to improve the Emergency Medical Service side of the department's mission as well as to improve the work space for the administrative side of the department who are all currently sharing one office. The department has outgrown its space, Mr. Houghton said. There is a greater demand for our EMS service.

There are new requirements to operate an emergency population center in the case of a flood or other disaster. Walpole is not the only town to experience more recent volatile weather events. And since Covid, personnel have to decontaminate an ambulance after every carry. Not only does the ambulance have to be decontaminated but the person as well. We can't do that in this building, Mr. Houghton said. So there are some spaces that have been upgraded, such as communications and ADA areas. For example, an elevator will be installed.

Some spaces are entirely new. The new floor plan includes several small individual offices, a large conference room, a decontamination area that includes lockers, a laundry, shower and three-sink setup. Also, on the second floor there's a large space for EMS housing that includes separate small

rooms for bedrooms, a living area and a larger area for storage. The total new two-story footage is 5,858 square-feet of addition.

Mr. Houghton said the department has already talked to all of the fire department's neighbors and they are on board with the project and the department will keep the neighbors informed on what is happening.

The total cost is \$3,800,000 but the proposed renovation and addition budget has funding assistance from local, state and federal sources. Already \$1,058,791 has been awarded by a FEMA grant. \$1,000,000 is pending on a federal Facilities grant. Mr. Houghton said since this is a federal grant, the department has to wait until the US government's fiscal year ends in June to know whether or not the department will receive the money. And yearly, the fire department has been putting money into a reserve fund, some times as much as \$100,000 a year. So \$913,994 will be taken out of the fire department's capital reserve fund and put towards this project. That leaves the Walpole Fire Department asking for a bond for 10 years for \$1,827,215, or \$827,215 if the federal Facilities grant is received.

Mr. Miller asked if the 753 calls were only for Walpole residents. He explained that the population of Walpole is about 3,500 and if the 753 calls were only for Walpole residents that would mean that about one out of every four people in town used the service this year. That number seemed high to Mr. Miller. With the police department requesting money this year for new land and a new building, Mr. Miller thought this was not the right time to be asking the public to foot the bill for another big project. The Walpole police department has been looking for land for a certainly needed new police station and the police department request could be for \$3,000,000 to \$5,000,000, he said. Mr. Dalessio said maybe \$7,000,000.

Mr. Houghton broke down the numbers again to 80 percent of the 753 calls for EMS and 20 percent for fire. And because the department is part of the Mutual Aid system, they also have to go out of town for those calls, which he estimated were 130 last year. Mr. Horton added that construction costs are currently very high - \$500 a square foot and in Vermont right now they are \$575 per square feet, he said.

But Mr. Miller continued saying that a fire department bond for \$1,827,215 and a police department bond were a lot for the townspeople to absorb in the same year.

Mr. Houghton reminded Mr. Miller that they had a very good chance to getting \$1,000,000 from the federal grant. And Mr. Houghton said they will continue to contribute money every year to the capital reserve fund that could be as much as \$100,000, which would help towards taxes. That piece on information made it easier for Mr. Miller to accept the cost of both projects.

Mr. MacLachlan asked about traffic flow. Mr. Houghton said now that the ambulances are facing Main Street they do not have to come out and go around the corner, saving precious time. They will drive straight out.

Also, lighting was mentioned and the department was reminded that the light should be directed downward to minimize glare to neighboring properties. Finally some asked about start time and Mr. Houghton said "July."

Since the Walpole Fire Department was not required to come and explain its project, Mr. Miller thanked them for coming.

## Old Business:

### **Public Hearing for site plan continued from December: Alyson's Orchard: Adam Naeck application for post-and-beam addition to the farm store and 7 glamping sites. Tax Map 4, Lot 44, 57 Alyson's Lane, Commercial/Industrial District.**

Mr. Naeck sent a cover letter and checklist asking that some of the lines pointing out that the items marked N/A meant that they were irrelevant to this specific project or that they were already existing. In fact, in the section regarding Plat Submission Items 18 of the 26 items were initialed N/A meaning not applicable. He also included an itemized list of what was inside and outside the glamping (glorified camping) units. And finally he sent a glamping site description and had large photographs of the interior and exterior units. One of the photos showed the space for parking for glampers. There is plenty of space for several cars for each glamping site. Mr. Naeck said he mistakenly said at a previous meeting that you can see the tents from Wentworth Road. You cannot.

Mr. Miller started by going over each item on the checklist, which is normally used for every site plan application. Then the discussion turned to the glamping units. The interior space is 320 square feet with 112 square feet of covered outside space. An interior photo showed a tent with a full-size bed, a dresser and a single bed next to it. A large kitchen table for eating and couches. There's also a mini fridge and space for a coffee bar, he said.

According to a handout from the company describing the tents, there are two different sizes 16-feet-by-20-feet (320 square feet) and 16-feet-by-24-feet (884 square feet). The canvas tent is treated for water, mildew and fire protection. Board members asked for the specifications on the fire protection. Mr. Naeck said he would get them as they are needed for a building permit. The base structure is either a 20 foot wide by 25 foot long (500 square feet) or 20 feet wide by 30 feet long (600 square feet) pressure treated deck. Concrete precast pylons are used for footings and pressure treated wood for framing. The interior floor and the deck floor are different materials. The outside flooring is pressure treated decking. The inside is southern yellow pine No. 2 tongue and groove. This allows for longevity to weather conditions outside the tents and a nicer finish inside the tents. Railings are all over 40 inches to the top rail using high tension cable 5.5 inches apart in between the deck floor and top rail. A 7-foot awning allows for covered patio space. All tents have electricity and Mr. Houghton said the electrical system for the glamping units is underground. There is no pole. All guests are considered short-term stays. They do not allow for bookings longer than 20 days consecutively. There is no water to the tents but there are Porto o potties and a private bathroom for guests that has a shower. There are gas grills outside each tent.

Four glamping tents will be on east side of the pond, with a couple near the event center. A photo shows the pond from the beach side. There is a sandy area and according to Mr. Naeck a fire hydrant nearby. You may have seen a small row boat there as well.

Mr. Perron wanted to know more about what would be in the post-and-beam structure. The square footage of the addition is 4638 and there will be loft. According to a previous meeting where a drawing of the structure was distributed the roof color is green, the exterior wall will be ship lap and painted red, which matches the rest of the building. The front will have two 10 foot wide by 12 feet tall barn doors. However, Mr. Perron wanted more information.

Mr. Naeck was reminded that once he had seven glamping sites, he had to come back to the Planning Board if he was going to add more. He said that he was aware of those conditions.

Mr. MacLachlan made a motion to approve the glamping plan. Mr. Perron seconded the motion and the motion carried. Mr. Naeck said he would come back next month and answer any questions about the post-and-beam building.

**Voluntary Merger:** Joe Sawyer, River Road South, Tax Map 4, Lot 2, rural/agricultural district. Joseph and Sonia Sawyer of 632 River Road requested a voluntary merger to put Tax map 1, Lot 2-1 and Tax Map 4, Lot 3-6 together. The lots are where the former flea market was held on Route 12.

Mr. Perron made a motion to approve the voluntary merger. Mr. Dalessio seconded the motion and the motion carried. The secretary will register the voluntary merger with Cheshire County Registry of Deeds.

**Workshop:** Mr. Miller said Mr. Edkins, Chair of Zoning Board Adjustment, approached him about the ZBA working on the Walpole Ordinance booklet. He suggested a joint workshop. So a workshop will be held on Thursday, February 27, at 7 pm in the downstairs conference room to discuss updating and recodifying our zoning ordinance. Some ZBA board members will attend.

**These minutes are unapproved and will be reviewed at the March 12, 2024 regular meeting for corrections, omission and additions.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilou Blaine  
Recording Secretary

cc: WPB , ZBA, Town Offices, The Walpolean  
Posted: Inside the Town Offices, on the bulletin board out Post Offices, [www.walpolenh.us](http://www.walpolenh.us)