

Town of Freedom Planning Board Meeting Minutes
2/13/2024
Town Office

Present: (Freedom Residents): Merideth Coffin, Kirk Thomas, Elaine Higgins, Heather Donahue; (Selectboard): Laura Greeley, Ryan Willette (arrived at 6:55 pm); (Planning Board Members): Mary Ann Bennett, Clara Alvarez, Peter Abello, Kevin Malady, Tyler Hadyniak, Brian Murphy, Prentice Grassi

Tyler gaveled into session at 5:58 pm.

Minutes of 1/23/24 Meeting

Willa Dibner's name was misspelled. Correction made.

Tyler moved to accept the minutes as amended. Mary Ann 2nd. Motion passed 7 – 0

Conversation with Select Board re: Solar Array Ordinance

Kirk Thomas requested to speak. Tyler granted. Kirk is on the Freedom Budget Committee and works as a project manager on solar energy system (SES) installations. He says he has visited 50 – 60 different SES sites through his work. He provided the following comments on the draft solar ordinance:

- Nothing in draft ordinance about erosion control of the site especially after project is installed. Especially important at the Carey Road site which is close to Freedom Pond
 - Merideth cited section 6.K which requires stormwater management plan
 - Elaine suggested adding consequences for unstable site (erosion) in ordinance.
- No setbacks from surface water tributaries
- 50-foot setback not enough. Kirk would like to see a 250-foot setback – this is a common setback in many other ordinances he reviewed
- Required maintenance language in ordinance lacking; thinks there should be a maximum grass height specified due to fire hazard of tall grass
 - Elaine suggested promoting grazing of sheep or goats to keep grass low; promoting dual use of such a development
- Section 3.A: recommends not singling out Town of Freedom from the requirements in this ordinance, stating that this could open up the town to a lawsuit
 - Response (Prentice): singled out town because any town project would be put before the residents for approval.
- No mention of setback from residence. Sited an example solar ordinance from State of Maine that has 500 – 1000 feet from residences. Provided a copy of this example ordinance Tyler said we will attach to these minutes.
- Application and permit fees way too low based on his experience. Kirk left the meeting.

Tyler asked Laura for Selectboard comments on draft ordinance. Laura responded that selectboard has not had time to meet on this and so has no comments. Laura stated that her interest is to protect the residents of Freedom and this draft ordinance as it stands right now does not protect the residents of the town, in her opinion. She stated that many townspeople do not know a solar ordinance is being drafted. A discussion ensued about how to get residents input to inform development of the ordinance. Options discussed:

- Town Newsletter
- Public Hearings – 2 hearings: 1 initial presentation of the draft ordinance and then a 2nd to get feedback
- A mailed survey to all residents followed up with a public meeting

Tyler conducted a straw poll of planning board members

- Who would like to see a survey sent out to residents? 5 – 2 in favor
- Who would like to see a in person information meeting? 7 – 0 in favor

Much discussion including arguments for and against survey and info meetings made/discussed. Mary Ann suggested sending out a survey to residents, obtaining responses, and then having a in-person informational meeting to discuss the results and get more feedback. Many informally agreed this was a great idea. This resulted in a motion from Kevin: Mary Ann collaborate with Heather to develop a draft survey to be reviewed by the Planning Board and Selectboard. Clara 2nd. All in favor? 7 – 0 motion passes.

Action: by 2/23 Mary Ann and Heather will send a draft survey by email to Planning Board and Selectboard for their review. At the next Planning Board Meeting (2/27) Planning Board will discuss and approve survey to be sent out to residents, assuming that the Selectboard approves the draft survey at their meeting on 2/26.

Agenda items to be added at 2/27 Planning Board meeting:

- Discussion/approval of draft survey
- Set schedule of public information meeting(s)

Tara and Wade Ambrose re: Smithton Road Subdivision

Tara contacted Tyler last week about whether her plan to divide two lots on Smithton Road falls under Freedom's Subdivision Ordinance. She does not yet own the lots. The lots in question are owned by Tom Harms. Much discussion trying to figure out details, which lead to the following motion by Tyler: Tyler will invite Tom Harms (owner of Smithton Road Lots in question), Jackie Robbins, and Tara Ambrose (prospective buyer of portions of same lots) to the 2/27 Planning Board meeting to provide clarification of what is going on with these lots so the Planning Board can determine whether or not this falls under the Towns Subdivision Ordinance. Prentice 2nd. All in favor? Motion passes 7 – 0.

Adjourn no later than 8 pm

Motion to adjourn (Kevin), Clara 2nd. All in favor? Motion passes 7 – 0. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm