

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 16, 2019

At the Selectmen's Meeting held on Monday, December 16, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. the following people were in attendance: John Tholl, Peter Corey, and Stanley Holz participated via conference call.

John Tholl called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Tholl called a Public Hearing Notice to order at 6:30 p.m. Pursuant to NH RSA 41-9:a, the Whitefield Board of Selectmen will hold a Public Hearing on Monday, December 16, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Whitefield Town Office, 56 Littleton Road, Whitefield, NH, to discuss the increases in Planning Board Development Application fees. (A copy of the list is attached.)

Peter Corey, the Selectmen's Representative to the Planning Board said that the Planning Board has discussed the fees and feels the fees should be increased. The fees go to cover the costs of the planning board. They also pay for the running of the ZBA, and it was also felt that the activities of the town assessor are a result of the development permits that are issued. There was also a discussion on the after-the-fact permit to increase it from \$150 to \$500. There are a number of people in town who continue to ignore the permit.

Bob Stiles asked what this money is used for, and Peter said that it offsets taxation. It is a user fee. If Mr. Gooden is not developing property, he doesn't have to pay for the cost of operating the planning board or the cost of the assessor's work who has to review all these permitted developments and add them to the tax roles. It actually reduces the general taxation on the people who do not use the development process. Bob thinks we should do some research in Lancaster and Littleton to see what they are charging for fees. Bob feels we are overstepping. Bob said we have been paying the assessor for as long as he can remember for pick-up work. Now anyone who does everything, you slam them. Bob thinks for new construction you shouldn't charge them, because you gain on the additional tax income. Bob says people wonder why they get slammed for the construction of a new home, and for a septic fee. We should welcome these people and not slam them with all these fees. Bob says you have all kinds of permits before it even gets to the Town. Bob said that the Town can hold them up for weeks on a septic permit. Bob says what does anybody know on the planning board about a septic design? The plans are approved by licensed septic designers at the state level. Why does the Town need to be involved in that process?

Shawn White said he has several questions, and he was looking for someone from the Planning Board to be in attendance. Who brought up the ideas of the fees increase? Peter said the Chairman. Do we know what towns were talked to in reference to the fees? Peter said initially we checked with seven town. Peter said our fees are significantly less than other town's fees. They thought it was a good place to start. Most towns have a code enforcement officer. Twin Mountain charges per square foot for their buildings, \$700 to \$1200. What costs does the town incur relative to development? Peter said ZBA, Planning Board budget, and the assessor budget. Combined those are \$40,000. The current fee schedule brought in about \$6000 this year. This is spent mostly on recording, processing the applications for the development activity. It offsets the costs. The Planning Board wants to relieve the burden on the general taxpayer. Peter says we are looking to cover the costs of development with the fees. Shawn said he is not 100% sold on the reason of that. Shawn thinks we will have the assessor here whether or not we have development or not. Shawn said that he doesn't agree with doubling the fees

for an accessory structure. Shawn said that \$50 does not seem like a lot to the Board, but to some people it is a lot of money. The more money you charge, the more people are going to hide it. A lot of these fees were just put in place and now you want to double them. Why punish people who want to improve their property? Shawn said a lot of these things like the septic design, these people have to spend money to get the septic design done and to pay for a surveyor to do a sub-division. Shawn said that Peter, John and Stanley know that the money is going to be used someplace else in the budget—it won't be used to offset the tax rate. Robert Loiacono said it seems that we are charging a fee to collect a fee. Bob said his tax bill just increased 31%, his water bill has doubled, and just because you can raise the fees doesn't mean you should. Sometimes enough is enough. Bob Stiles said if we going to enforce all these codes, where is the inspector? Peter said we don't have an enforcement officer. Peter said no decision has been made to do a code enforcement officer.

Mr. Mallion said the ZBA fully supports the after-the-face permit penalty. Most of their decisions are based on those violations. Shawn said he spoke to Scott about this, and Scott said his big deal is with the after-the-fact permit penalty. Scott said he was not big on the other increases. Shawn said please think about this, and he thinks a lot of these fees don't need to be raised.

Bob Stiles said on septic permits, he waited three weeks for the planning board to have their meeting and he paid \$800 to \$900 to have it designed and then the state charged him another \$350 and now the town has a septic fee. Bob says you have to wait for the Planning Board to meet to approve it. We pay a licensed septic designer, why do we need to pay the planning board for a permit? Peter said there is work in processing your septic design at the planning board. Stanley said you are talking about \$25 increases on most of the fees. Stanley said these are not major increases and the town has limited revenue so with this user fee, the users of the service are the ones paying for it.

The general overall population of the town doesn't even see the planning board. Stanley doesn't see a huge impact on charging these fees. Bob Stile said if you are building a new home, you have seven different fees you are paying.

Mark Lufkin said so does that mean that the Planning Board won't ask for their \$6,000? Peter said the Planning Board will still have their budget request. These are fees that come in as revenue to offset the tax rate.

Shawn said \$25 isn't a lot, but when you add up all these fees, and some of these just came in and all but one are being doubled. Shawn said that maybe we should ask for a higher fee when we started the fee process. If it is such a big issue, there should be someone here from the Planning Board at the meeting. Mr. Gooden said that no one is here from the planning board to explain, and they should cancel this meeting and make sure there are people from the planning board in attendance. Mr. Mallion of the ZBA said he is in attendance. Peter said Scott Burns was here last week, thinking it was the hearing last week. Peter said that he is sharing what went on at the Planning Board. Peter said that Mr. Burns raised the after-the-fact permit penalty, and all members agreed with the increase in the fees.

The Public Hearing closed at 7:00 p.m.

Peter Corey made a motion to approve the Planning Board's recommended fee schedule. The motion was seconded by Stanley Holz. John Tholl said he is uncomfortable not having someone from the Planning Board in attendance tonight. A voice vote was taken on the motion: Peter: Yes; Stanley: Yes. John: No, as no one from the Planning Board was in attendance. Motion passed, 2-1.

Mr. Gooden discussed the proposed water line that goes under the river. He said it should be mentioned to the engineer.

The Board reviewed the Recreation Department budget request for 2020. The Community Day was discussed and how we can get more people involved and how to get more promotion of the event.

The Board reviewed the current employee health insurance contributions. Peter Corey made a motion to increase the Single Plan contribution from \$105 a month to \$115 a month, two-person plan contribution from \$260 to \$280 a month, and family plan contribution from \$400 to \$430 a month. The motion was seconded by Stanley Holz. All in favor, 3-0.

The review and approval of the December 9, 2019 Selectmen's Meeting Minutes was tabled until the January 6, 2020 meeting.

A motion was made by Peter Corey to enter into non-public session at 7:15 p.m. pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3, II(c), Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of this board, unless such person requests an open meeting. The motion was seconded by Stanley Holz. All in favor (Holz: Yes; Corey: Yes; Tholl: Yes), 3-0. Motion passed.

The Board adjourned from non-public session at 7:40 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.