

Shaftsbury Planning Commission

January 11, 2021

In person at Cole Hall and remotely via the Zoom platform

Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:05 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Martha Cornwell, Mike Foley, and Naomi Miller (all remotely). Also present, in person, was zoning administrator Shelly Stiles.

Outstanding minutes

Ms. Miller moved to accept the December 14 minutes. Mr. Foley seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Discussion, accessory dwelling units

Mr. Williams noted that, in the bylaw definitions, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are limited to no more than 30% of the area of the primary residence, but that in the tables related to the various districts, the percentage is 50%. It was suggested that the ratio of ADU square footage to primary residence square footage be changed to 50% in the definitions. It was also suggested that in the case of the conversion of an existing structure, the habitable area of the converted space be limited to no more than 50% of the area of the primary residence.

Mr. Williams noted that road frontage requirements for the various districts range from at least 50 feet to 300 feet. He said this limits development potential for interior parcels, of which he said there are many in town. He offered as an example the piece of land he sold to a neighbor in 1973 (pre-zoning) with a 25 foot right of way. He wondered what the benefit of such restrictions might be. Ms. Stiles suggested they might help limit forest fragmentation, especially by flag-lot developments. Ms. Miller said that if we're going to be guided by the Town Plan, we should limit forest fragmentation. Ms. Stiles pointed out that bylaw 3.2.2. reads "No land development may be permitted on lots that have a frontage of less than 50 feet on a public street. However, with the DRB's approval, land development may be permitted on a lot otherwise conforming with this Bylaw which has access to a public street by a permanent easement or Right-of-Way not less than 20 feet wide for one lot, or not less than 50 feet wide for more than one lot." She said this section would make legal even today Mr. Williams's 1973 example. Mr. Foley suggested we focus on development possibilities, such as a shared driveway, already offered by the bylaw, and better publicize those options. Maybe people don't know that dwelling units over garages are legal, for example.

Mr. Williams wondered what the rationale is for regulating building coverages.

The discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Paramilitary facilities

Ms. Miller suggested adopting the language suggested at the last meeting, at least until Senator Baruth's bill S. 182 prohibiting the ownership and operation of paramilitary training camps in Vermont wends its way through the legislature. That language was reflected in the December 14 minutes, as follows: "No new public or member-limited facility the purpose of which is the promoting of or the discharge of munitions is permitted in the Town of Shaftsbury." Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Other business

Ms. Stiles reported that PC candidate Erin Cross will be interviewed by the Select Board on January 17. The Select Board can appoint her that night, so her first meeting with the Commission will be January 25. Ms. Stiles will stay in touch with her.

Mr. Williams noted that the Select Board will be reviewing housing grants related to the Shires Housing project on January 17 and encouraged people to attend. (It will be a close out hearing on the grants the town received on behalf of Shires – a formality to enable the town to distribute the rest of the grant.)

The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 7 p.m.