

PLANNING BOARD/SELECTBOARD JOINT MEETING

DATE: January 16, 2020

TIME: 5:30 P.M.

FOR: Joint Meeting Planning Board/Selectboard

PLACE: Large Meeting Room

PRESENT: Selectboard: Steve Bannon, Chair; Ed Abrahams; Bill Cooke; Kate Burke;
Leigh Davis

Planning Board: Brandee Nelson, Chair; Jonathan Hankin; Jeremy Higa;
Pedro Pachano; Garfield Reed

Mark Pruhenski, Town Manager

Chris Rembold, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Planning & Community
Development

Mr. Bannon called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

SHORT TERM RENTALS: CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Ms. Burke provided an update on short term rentals in Great Barrington. She said the information gathered so far contradicts itself. She said work is being done to get as much information as possible to work out the contradiction.

Mr. Fick asked how many short term rentals are in Town.

Ms. Burke said according to the State report there are 99 units. She said that number is not totally accurate because some units there is personal knowledge of are not on the report.

Mr. Hankin asked if Air B&B could be contacted for a list.

Ms. Burke said the State is requiring registration in order to be listed on Air B&B.

Mr. Rembold said it is difficult for the State records to comply with what we know personally. He said a local registry might be helpful.

Mr. Fick agreed.

Ms. Nelson asked if short term rentals violate zoning.

Mr. Rembold said home occupations allow up to 3 rooms to be rented in an owner occupied home.

Ms. Nelson said she is not sure that is happening. She asked if the Zoning Enforcement Officer should be looking into violations.

Mr. Rembold said in order to enforce the bylaws there would need to be some basic local data. There would need to be a way to track the use. It would be a massive job to enforce.

Mr. Pruhenski said we would have to discuss to determine if we have the ability to enforce.

Ms. Burke said she would like to move forward with creating regulations.

Mr. Hankin expressed his concern that a local registration in addition to that already required by the state might stoke fear and encourage non-compliance with the regulation.

Ms. Davis said she had spoken with Town Administrator Chris Ketchen. She said Lenox just approve a bylaw. She suggested that Mr. Ketchen might bring some information that we could learn from.

Mr. Bannon suggested having Mr. Pruhenski speak to Mr. Ketchen. Maybe Mr. Ketchen could attend the next meeting.

HOUSING SUB-COMMITTEE:

Ms. Burke provided a hand out with recommendations from the Housing Sub-Committee.

Mr. Pachano said the question is how do we generate more affordable housing? He suggested that the Town consider a tax exemption for people who provide affordable housing. He said affordable housing is an issue that needs to be attacked from all levels.

Mr. Abrahams asked what percentage of people would qualify for affordable housing.

Mr. Pachano said 50% of the people in Town would qualify for affordable housing.

Mr. Abrahams said so many people qualify that it would cost the Town money.

Mr. Pachano said perhaps instead of a tax abatement the Town would not increase the taxes on someone who provides affordable housing.

Mr. Hankin asked if there would be some rent control in order to qualify for an abatement.

Mr. Pachano said there would have to be an annual review of the renter through tax returns.

Mr. Hankin said the language would have to be clear that heat and utilities would be included.

Mr. Fick said we are not creating language at this point. He suggested that qualification language could possibly be obtained from Construct or Bostwick Gardens.

Ms. Burke said she would like staff to gather numbers.

Ms. Nelson asked if staff would be gathering numbers for loss of revenue.

Mr. Pachano said not for loss of revenue. He said if someone creates a second unit the suggestion would be for them to continue to be assessed as a single family instead of a two-family.

Mr. Bannon said he didn't want staff drafting legislation until we have more information.

Mr. Abrahams made a motion that Town staff work to research and create draft language describing the proposal for tax incentives and possible inclusion on the warrant for the 2020 ATM, Mr. Cooke seconded, all in favor.

Mr. Bannon said he would want research done and review of the information by other members of the Town.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE:

Mr. Abrahams said the EDC was looking at other types of businesses. He said the cultural district is an economic driver. He said there is not much to update but the Committee hopes to have more information for the next joint meeting.

Mr. Hankin asked if there could be some discussion about changing the SPGA for residential uses. He said he and Mr. Pachano are on the Housing Sub-Committee. He said there are many issues that require going to the Planning Board for site plan review and the Selectboard for a special permit. He said the intent, in order to facilitate more housing, is to streamline the process for applicants by having them go to just one board, the Planning Board. There appeared to be no objection to the idea.

Ms. Burke said there are some things that are outdated. She said the applicants go to the Planning Board anyway.

Ms. Nelson said the language can be sent to the Selectboard for their review.

Ms. Davis said she would like to have parking included on the next agenda. She said she would like to have a strategic discussion and hear everyone's views. She said Joe Grochmal will have an updated parking plan for the Selectboard soon.

Ms. Nelson suggested discussing way finding signage.

Ms. Davis she would like to discuss the whole strategy.

Mr. Reed said an inordinate amount of time is spent on parking concerns. He said he would rather have energy and incentives put into housing.

Mr. Pachano said that Tim Newman spoke at a recent Design Advisory Committee meeting about signage for the Town.

Ms. Burke said Mr. Newman attended a Selectboard meeting to discuss his idea.

Mr. Pachano suggested that some of the money designated for open space might be spent on creating signage for the Town specifically the signs for open space areas. He said it would be beneficial for the Town to develop a standard for municipal properties, a uniform style that people would recognize as a unique Town standard.

The Boards scheduled the next joint meeting for Thursday February 6 at 5:30 at the Town Hall.

HOME RULE PETITION:

Ms. Davis asked the Selectboard to endorse her representing the Town at the hearing for the Home Rule Petition.

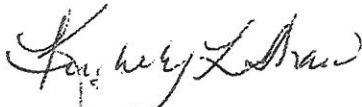
Mr. Bannon made a motion that the Selectboard endorse member Leigh Davis to convey the results of the December 11, 2019 special town meeting vote at the public hearing before the Joint Committee Protection and Professional Licensure at the Massachusetts State House in Boston, Mr. Abrahams seconded, all in favor.

CITIZEN'S SPEAK TIME:

No one spoke.

Having concluded their business Mr. Bannon adjourned without objection at 6:23 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kimberly L. Shaw".

Kimberly L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary