

Freetown Planning Board
Minutes of the Tuesday, April 3, 2018 Meeting
Town Hall – Assonet, Mass.

RECEIVED
FREETOWN TOWN CLERK
2018 APR 18 PM 2:22
J. Brown

Present: Keven Desmarais, James Frates, and Debra Robbins.

Absent: Robert Jose and Mark Rogers.

Call to order: Mr. Desmarais called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Continued Public Hearing – Fallbrook Definitive Subdivision

Mr. Desmarais called the continued public hearing back to order and stated that the applicant had requested a continuance to Tuesday, May 1st. A motion was made by Ms. Robbins, seconded by Mr. Frates, to continue the hearing to Tuesday, May 1, 2018, at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. The motion carried unanimously.

Informal Discussion with Residents of Assonet Bay Shores

Mr. Desmarais explained that this discussion has been ongoing for many years. There are some property owners in Assonet Bay Shores who own more than one lot shown on the 1960 subdivision plan who, because of changes in state law and subsequent court cases, are unable to build on their second, third, etc., lots due to issues of common ownership. In some instances, people purchased a second or third adjoining lot as an investment, or so their children or grandchildren could build, but the law has rendered the lots unbuildable because they were in common ownership. Mr. Desmarais stated the Planning Board has always put the burden on these lot owners to propose changes to address their concerns.

Mr. Frates asked if this conversation was restricted to Assonet Bay Shores, or if it would also touch on subdivisions like Meadowlane that originally had quarter-acre lots with 100 feet of frontage. Mr. Desmarais felt that the conversation should start with Assonet Bay Shores since those are the property owners who have come forward, and also because Assonet Bay Shores is serviced by municipal water.

Ms. Robbins asked how many additional houses could be built in Assonet Bay Shores if the change were made. The clerk stated that if the idea was to revert to the original subdivision lots, there could be 60 to 70 additional houses built. Consensus was that adding that many houses was not desirable.

Craig Cabral was present on behalf of the property owners who would like to see changes in the zoning by-laws. Mr. Cabral stressed that the idea was not to have all of the original lots made eligible to build again, but to focus on lots that have not been intentionally combined. He cited Maura Gray, Mike Burns, Mike Pillarella, and Mrs. DeFeo as examples of people who owned multiple lots who did not purposefully combine them, but whose second-plus lots were rendered unbuildable by legislation.

Mr. Desmarais noted limitations that might need to be considered. Examples given were buying two lots that were described in a deed as a single lot, buying two lots that had been shown on a plan to be combined into two lots, a lot that might be made buildable by a zoning change but that had a sizeable amount of wetlands or marshland, etc. Mr. Cabral offered his home as an example, where he has two lots but his dwelling is centered on the two lots and therefore they couldn't be split apart. Another example offered was a house on one lot and the septic system on the adjoining lot.

"Pro" comments included adding to the stock of housing affordable to single-income people or young married couples needing a starter home. Mr. Desmarais noted that all the infrastructure – public roads, municipal water, utilities – are already present. This would just be a matter of clearing a lot and building, not all the preparatory work.

Consensus was to submit a "placeholder" article for the Annual Town Meeting to begin the process. In the meantime, Mr. Cabral would forward the by-law proposal his group is considering to the Planning Board for review. It was agreed to place this topic on the agenda for April 17th.

Planning Technician Position

The clerk stated there were currently seven applicants for the Planning Technician position. Board members reviewed the applications that had been received and a consensus formed around three candidates to interview. Those candidates, listed alphabetically, were Brian DeVries, Phillip Duarte, and Chrstopher McKay. [For interview information, see "Any Other Business..." below.]

Receive Minutes / Receive Schedule of Bills Paid

A motion was made by Mr. Frates, seconded by Mr. Desmarais, to approve the minutes of March 20th as submitted. The motion carried 2-0-1 with Ms. Robbins abstaining.

Any Other Business Properly before the Board

It was noted that Borrego Solar is still trying to schedule their joint meeting with the Conservation Commission and Planning Board. So far the two boards have not formed a consensus on a date. Mr. Desmarais will try and find an agreeable date to do that joint meeting as well as the Planning Technician interviews.

Also under this heading, Mr. Desmarais asked if the Planning Board would want to appear as a cosponsor of the Conservation Commission's article for the Annual Town Meeting seeking to establish an Agricultural Commission in town. The function of such a commission was discussed. It was also noted that the idea was born of Lauren Moreau's work on establishing a farmer's market in town. There was no objection to the two boards co-sponsoring the article.

Meeting Adjourned

A motion was made by Mr. Frates, seconded by Ms. Robbins, to adjourn at 7:30 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

This is a True Record by me.

Attest: Michael T. McCue
Michael T. McCue, Clerk pro tem