

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
Planning Board Public Hearing
December 11, 2024
Minutes

Present: Linda Moore, Alecia Loveless, Veronica Morris, Sally Fitzgerald, Jerry Blanchard, Sean Gawlik, and James Gleason
Absent: Kevin Roy

Linda called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and appointed James Gleason as a full voting member.

Maudie Hampden of 122 Tellman Lane was before the Planning Board for a conceptual meeting for her Hipcamp sites on her property on Tax Map 417 Lot 02. Veronica Morris inquired about how many campsites there would be on the property. Maudie explained there were only two. Veronica noted there would be no need for a site plan review for two campsites.

The next order of business was to review the proposed warrant articles for the March vote.

The Planning Board reviewed the proposal for the Short-Term Rental warrant article submitted by the Short-Term Rental Committee.

The STR committee proposes replacing the current paragraph 3 of the inspection requirements (labeled "Existing") with new text ("New") that will allow for compliance. The current text asks for things that cannot be provided or will expire shortly after creation, which does not address the actual need, an adequately-sized, non-failed septic system. This is the only change.

EXISTING: The septic system is properly functioning, with a NHDES permit on file for the number of bedrooms. For systems without a NHDES permit on file, an evaluation by a NH Certified Septic System Evaluator will be required, along with a current NHDES-approved design to be constructed in the event of system failure.

NEW: The septic system is properly sized and functioning as demonstrated by one or more of the following: (a) NHDES septic permit from the time of construction that documents the system size and number of bedrooms; (b) an evaluation by a NH Certified Septic System Evaluator; (c) a statement by a septic servicer within the past 12 months with number of gallons pumped and that the system did not appear to be in failure at the time it was serviced.

Next the Planning Board reviewed the proposed warrant article for the lighting and sign ordinances submitted by the Conservation Commission.

Are you in favor of adopting changes to update the town's outdoor lighting ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

These changes aim to prevent the spread of light pollution, enhance safety, limit energy waste, protect the well-being of residents and local wildlife and preserve the rural character of our night skies.

The proposed ordinance does this by establishing clear guidelines for outdoor lighting to reduce glare, limit light from trespassing onto neighboring properties, and improve the functionality of outdoor lighting.

It requires:

- **All new outdoor lighting** must be shielded to direct light downward, avoid harmful overly bright blue light, and designed to prevent spillover onto neighboring properties or public areas.
- **Commercial and Industrial Lighting:** Lights must reduce brightness outside of business hours, avoid excessive illumination, and prevent glare.
- **Exemptions:** Temporary, emergency, and seasonal lighting are exempt, as well as existing fixtures until replacement.

Veronica liked the specificity of the new language but questioned what the maximum word count was for the warrant. The clerk will research before the next meeting so work can continue on making any further revisions needed.

The Board moved on to review the proposed changes to the sign ordinance.

PROPOSED WARRANT ARTICLE WORDING FOR THE SIGN ORDINANCE CHANGE:

Are you in favor of adopting an amendment as proposed by the Planning Board to the Town's current Sign Zoning Ordinance to help reduce light pollution? Under the proposed change, no internally lit signs would be permitted because the light cannot be shielded and directed away from public streets and adjoining structures such as homes. Signs may be externally lit only, using lighting that faces downward. In addition, sign lighting shall be dimmed by 50 percent, or turned off, outside of business operating hours. Existing signs would not be affected

Veronica suggests changing the language to, *are you in favor of adopting an amendment as proposed by the Planning Board to the Town's current Sign Zoning Ordinance to **be in compliance with the lighting ordinance, existing and proposed.***

Next the Planning Board looks at the proposed ordinance for Hotels, Motels, and Condotels by special exception.

Veronica feels the language needs some work. It was suggested to change the verbiage from:

To see if the Town will vote to add the specific use of "hotels, motels and condotels" to the list of permitted uses in the zoning ordinance. To be added in all districts except District V. To make this use be by special exception. To change the glossary term "public accommodations" by removing the uses of hotels, motels and condotels.

To:

To see if the Town will vote to add the specific use of “hotels, motels and condotels” to the list of permitted uses in the zoning ordinance, in all districts except District V, and to make this use be by special exception. Remove the glossary term “public accommodations.”

The Board reviewed the minutes from 11/13/2024. Sally Fitzgerald motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Alecia Loveless seconded the motion. Sean Gawlik and Veronica Morris also voted in favor of approving the minutes. Jerry Blanchard and Linda Moore abstained due to absence.

Sean Gawlik motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:45. Alecia Loveless seconded the motion and an all in favor vote followed.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Ferringo

Planning and Zoning Board Clerk