

Town of Beech Mountain
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
June 26, 2012

Call to Order:

Chairman Paul O'Connell called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Other Board Members present in attendance were John Hoffman, James True, Matt LaVigne and Planning Director James Scott.

Adoption of Agenda:

John Hoffman made a motion to adopt the agenda. James True seconded and the motion was carried with no opposition.

Approval of Minutes:

James True made a motion to adopt the minutes from the previous Planning Board meeting. John Hoffman seconded and the motion was carried with no oppositions.

Discuss Storage Containers:

Chairman Paul O'Connell pointed out the first thing is "Storage Containers." James Scott explains that a few months ago specific situations came up that luckily resolved themselves. There were a few places on the mountain that had large containers on their property that were able to be viewed from the road and from adjacent properties and some of the neighbors had complained. One location was at a residential house. The container was equivalent to a train car and was parked in their driveway. James Scott stated he had contacted the owners and they explained they had had some damage to their house and they had to move all their furniture out until everything was repaired. James Scott explained the next location was at down the road at The Beach to Beech building. They had a tractor trailer box using it for permanent storage for a few months. James Scott pointed out that there's nothing in the ordinance that states that you can't do that. James Scott stated he wanted to bring this to the Planning Board to let them know that they had had these complaints and is this something they want to look into. He pointed out that he had written out a draft for them to look over and discuss. John Hoffman stated that for construction sites as long as there hasn't been a CO problem for the house. Contractors use them to store things and for different reasons. Another thing is if someone is moving or has had damage to their house, then there should not be a problem. James True stated that people may need one but they don't need for it to sit there forever. John Hoffman suggested on allowing them to sit on property for up to 30 days. James True suggested on adding it to the permit when applied for and that way they can leave it sitting there for as long as the permit is good. James Scott explained that they still needed something in the ordinances for the requirements to be able to base this on. Paul O'Connell stated he thought that to limit the size to 8' X 16' and then limit the time. James Scott stated he thought 30 days would be a reasonable amount of time. John Hoffman stated that if you were remodeling or something then it may have to be there longer. James Scott points out that in the draft that he had written that they would be exempt if they are using the construction process.

James Scott asks if they want to say where they can put the containers. Paul O'Connell asks if there's anything in the building code to stop someone from having a shed or anything like that in the backyard. James Scott points out that there is a limitation to the number of accessory structures someone can have in the backyard, however if it's a shed and fixed to the ground then that would be different. James Scott points out that if it is under 12 feet in any dimension then you don't have to a permit but you have to meet zoning which says you can only have one accessory structure per lot in addition to your house. He states that if they are in the back yard and if they are not obtrusive to the neighbor then maybe we should not bother with it. John Hoffman stated that he thought if it looks like a storage container than it should be considered as one. James Scott stated that he had written that storage containers greater than a certain size such as railroad style, metal shipping containers or tractor trailers should not be permitted on properties. James Scott asks the Planning Board if maybe they need more of a definition for what a storage container is or do they just trust that everyone will know that if it is being used for storage then it is considered to be a storage container.

Paul O'Connell states that all storage containers should be limited to or larger than 8x8x16 and no longer than 30 days except jobs with building permits and they are exempt. James True states that he thinks that storage container needs to be more clearly defined. Also he thinks such a regulation should be for residential districts only due to Ski Beech. James Scott states he likes where James True suggested on doing a better definition on exactly what containers are and what they are used for. John Hoffman states he thinks it needs to be more for the residential because he doesn't know what is going to be done for the commercial area. James Scott stated he would work on the wording and bring it back.

Comprehensive Planning:

James Scott states that the first thing is that they have finished the survey that was sent out online with different questions for people to answer. He was really happy with all of the response that was received. There were 507 people that replied to the survey. Boone did a similar survey and only received about 1000 responses back. James Scott had all the questions and responses pulled up on a screen and went over each question and what the response was for each question. A few things that really stood out was there were a lot of people that said that it was the friendliness of the people and the tightness of the community that they really valued as well as the laid back way of life. People also highly valued the natural environment, wild life, views and the climate. James Scott points out that the reason for all this is important is because in developing our plan, we want to get at what people love about Beech Mountain and make sure we protect those things. James Scott continues to read and go over all the questions and responses.

James Scott states that the next issue is planning a future for Beech Mountain. The first thing is "land use" because this is the fundamental basic thing for planning. Based on the input of what we have received, we know what the people are looking for. James Scott points out that he has had a lot of help from Robert Haigh, an intern from Appalachian State; he has been helping write this chapter. Robert Haigh displays a power point of what they have come up with so far and goes over everything with the Planning Board. The first thing is the outline of Beech Mountain and how we have gotten to where we are today concerning issues and land use. Robert Haigh points out that they have started working on "goals" and "policies". They have tried to follow the survey to be able to maintain the point field and to do this they are going to follow the

“smart growth policy”. Robert Haigh states that he has added some maps and pictures on paper so they would know what he was talking about.

James True suggested that he thinks they should really push the education aspect as it pertains to land conservation opportunities such as land trusts. James Scott stated that he thinks that a new strategy of more public education would be good, but we would have to have a specific program on how it would work. James True suggested on having workshops to encourage neighborhood activities and involvement, also that way things could be explained to help people understand different things. James Scott suggests on maybe getting a land trust to come up and explain what they can do to help. John Hoffman also thought that would be good because it would help people understand more.

Robert Haigh states that although the Town had a clear goal to see more conservation, it did not have the budget to pursue the outright acquisition of land. James Scott pointed out that the town used to have a policy and a budget line item for the acquisition of one lot a year and would keep those vacant lots for green space. He discussed that in the long term, this could be something that we could go back to. James Scott also stated that in the current economic situation, some lots are being donated to the town for free. John Hoffman stated that those lots should already be predestined for green space that are unable to build on. James Scott pointed out there is a policy to keep those lots as green space. Robert Haigh goes on talking about our current policies and regulations pertaining to development.

Robert Haigh points out the next item on the list is pertaining to trails and making Beech Mountain a more walkable town. James Scott states that the Recreation department is working on a whole recreation plan that is going to be a chapter. James Scott also states that the trail dedication is something that the Planning Board had talked about before he came. However the way to do this would be if someone developed a new sub-division, require them to have a certain amount of trails and green space too. Paul O’Connell states he thought this had already been approved. James Scott stated that it is not written into the standards that the sub-division has to do this but that they could make it mandatory. He also states that the all the sub-division policies need to be gone over and rewritten.

Paul O’Connell pointed out that still if someone got hurt on “your” land walking on a trail, then you would still be responsible because of it still being your land. James Scott stated that the town may be able to add it to their insurance if the land owner decided to put a trail on their property. Paul O’Connell pointed out that as long as someone is on the trail then they may be covered, but if someone walked off the trail and got hurt who would be responsible. John Hoffman stated that when not charging to use these trails that a lot of the liabilities go away. James Scott stated that he thought that was true and he thinks that the insurance is flexible but that he will check on this and make sure of how it works and let them know.

Chairman Paul O’Connell asks if there is anything else that needs to be brought up. James Scott points out that James True has brought up an issue concerning “public education” that he thinks needs to be talked about. James Scott stated that he would continue to work on this and bring it back at the next meeting.

Discuss Watauga Comprehensive Transportation Plan:

Chairman Paul O’Connell states that the next issue is the “Watauga Transportation Plan”. James Scott states that the NCDOT is working with all the localities up here to develop a transportation plan for Watauga County. James Scott pointed out that one of the things that might benefit the town is to show on their map of potential projects another entrance or exit to

the Town of Beech Mountain. One area James Scott suggested was Cherry Gap road next to Fire Station #2. James Scott pointed out that he thinks that the Town of Beech Mountain needs an evacuation route in case of emergency. After discussion everyone agreed this would be a good thing to look into.

James Scott points out the other issue on their list is roads for bicycle and pedestrian improvement. He suggested having them include Hwy. 184 as a location for possible bike lanes. John Hoffman stated that he thinks that it would be a very good idea to approach the state on doing this due to all the bicycles that travel these roads. James Scott also proposed including our Streetscape paths on the county plan, in the hopes that the State might provide funding for future improvements. After discussing this issue everyone agreed this needs to be done.

Discuss Sign Ordinance:

Paul O'Connell stated the "Sign Ordinance" is the next issue. James Scott pointed out that the ordinance requires the lot number to be posted at each construction site. The Planning Board had discussed this before and decided that no one knows what those lot numbers are, so we wanted to require that addresses be posted instead of lot numbers. John Hoffman stated to forget the lot numbers and do the addresses because no one understands the lot numbers. John Hoffman pointed out to make sure that people know the address numbers do not need to be a routed sign—they just have to have the numbers on them and be visible from the road. James Scott suggests on specifying that if your house was not visible from the road, the number should be on a mailbox or monument at the road and also on your house. James Scott suggested taking out (c) under section 278 and then go back to section 275 and look at expanding that by saying numbers are to be visible from the road and also on the house.

James Scott suggested on breaking up the sign issues and discuss one each month and send it to Town Council and get each one approved until they have all been gone through.

Other Business:

James True asks about the hearing on July 3rd 2012 concerning the "Cell Towers". James Scott pointed out that this hearing has been canceled.

Call to Adjournment:

Chairman Paul O'Connell called for a motion to adjourn. John Hoffman moved for the motion and James True seconded and was carried with no objection.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Scott
Secretary to the Board