

FINAL

Bridgewater Planning Board
May 16, 2023 Minutes

Board members present: Chair- Patrick Roach, Ken Weidman, P. Wesley Morrill Jr., Steve Hering, Joe Wilkas, Paul Wilson, James Gickas, Ex-officio- Terry Murphy

Public present: Amanda Thomas (manager, Newfound Country Store), Craig Hall (owner, Newfound Country Store), Holly K. Hall (owner, Newfound Country Store)

Patrick called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and declared that the meeting was informational regarding the use of, and parking at, Newfound Country Store's recent addition.

Holly explained that they had approached the board in 2007/2008 for an addition to the back of the store but that they could not afford it at that time due to a situation with the gas company and the economic recession. She stated that a private buyer made an offer on the store though it was not for sale and, as a family, they decided that they were not interested in selling. She continued that they needed to plan how to go forward with the existing business to be able to afford to stay open year-round. She explained that in the winter they used to get 300+ snowmobilers a weekend, but with the lack of snow recently, they only get business for 3 weeks from snowmobilers and don't have the skiing population they used to. She stated that the three months of summer are fantastic for business but not enough to carry them year-round. She shared that a friend recommended the Amish for their addition and Holly stated their quote to build was half that of other bids. She went on to say that around November 2020 they presented the board with a different site plan. She stated that last summer they approached the board again for a lot line adjustment so that Craig could build a shop as well as for the addition. She stated that the addition is out of the 40' x 60' footprint due to a farmers porch and that the permit was adjusted to reflect that. She stated that she received a letter from the Selectboard requesting an explanation of use for the building.

Patrick shared that he wasn't on the board for previous business with Newfound Country Store and asked other members of the board for input on their previous plans. Ken asked Terry to get the plans that had been submitted to the town previously. Patrick asked what the addition will be used for.

Holly answered that the addition is an expansion of retail space. She stated that she received a letter a couple of weeks ago that was dated a couple of years ago regarding removal of the containers on the property. She shared the containers have since been removed and were used as storage during construction. She stated that the garage is not used for inventory; it is used for equipment storage.

The board reviewed multiple site plans but did not have the most recently submitted plan.

Patrick asked what the new dimensions were including the porch. Amanda answered 46' x 60' but that it does not encroach on any property lines by hundreds of feet.

Craig stated that previously, the concern was for parking and that he has moved his equipment and cleaned up to make space for such. He stated cars can drive around the building and Amanda added that an 18-wheeler drove around the building today.

Holly added that the set of plans the board didn't have in front of them also had a permitted deck but that it rotted and has since been removed. Craig stated that the sheds had also been removed.

Terry shared his concern that when the store is busy, the traffic patterns become zig zagged and dangerous; cars backing toward gas pumps, inventory trucks coming and going in opposite directions around both the pumps and building, school busses, etc. He stated that there needs to be signage explaining the traffic patterns and suggested "no trucks," "do not enter," "truck and trailer parking," and perhaps "one way." He went on to say that the board needs to see the traffic flow and parking spots delineated on the site plans. Holly replied that she has spent hundreds of dollars on parking signs so far.

Ken explained that the site plans not currently at the meeting showed parking where the animals were and has been moved. He requested proper dimensions be added to the site plans.

Terry gave Craig the Town of Bridgewater, New Hampshire Site Plan Review Regulations. He stated that the current submitted site plan needs to be withdrawn and the newest one submitted.

Patrick asked if there would be a danger to pedestrians either entering or exiting the addition due to visibility for big trucks. Holly responded no and showed why on the plans.

Terry asked if they could create a truck entrance and label it with a sign. Holly said yes and that she would be willing to paint lines or arrows if necessary.

Ken stated that if they place signs, someone chooses not to follow them, and gets in an accident, then they will have done their due diligence in the eyes of insurance. Holly responded that in the last 18 years there has never been an accident at the store's entrance. She continued that she moved employee parking to the back of building to make more room.

Terry asked if there was any chance of a large truck hitting the farmers porch and Craig answered no, there is big enough swing but that delivery trucks occasionally hit the overhang in the delivery area. Terry stated that the selectmen have an issue with safe parking and transit.

Patrick requested the site plan from 2020.

Ken asked if, when they revise the site plan, are they going to back to the previous plan. Holly answered yes because they are no longer doing a lot line adjustment.

Ken stated the next time they come in for a meeting will be a minor site plan review. Holly requested a meeting date. Terry stated they need a letter withdrawing the existing plan and to bring back the mylar so the tax map can be reverted if already altered.

Ken explained that the board's next meeting is June 20th and in order to get the notice in the paper properly, everything will need to be received no later than May 31st with all abutters being notified. He added that the parking spaces must be noted on the site plan as well as the traffic flow and building size to include the porch. Holly asked what happens if abutter notices are returned to her and Ken answered the board just needs proof they were sent.

Patrick asked the board for comments. Paul asked about big boat trailers at the pumps and where they park. Holly answered they park in the upper lot in the back of the building. Steve stated it may be confusing for customers because some of the parking lot is paved and some of it is dirt. Holly replied they are not allowed to pave. Steve responded that a parking lot is considered impervious ground and that they should be able to. Terry added that the site plan review should consider paving.

Holly and Terry had a brief conversation regarding a letter to the liquor commissioner which ended with Terry stating that was a selectmen issue and is not for the planning board. Craig stated there will never be a bar at the Newfound Country Store as long as he is an owner.

Terry asked if there were smoke alarms in the addition and Amanda answered there were four. Holly added there were lighted exit signs as well.

The public left the meeting. Terry stated he was unaware that they changed the site plan and that it will be cleaner on a new piece of paper.

Paul made a motion to adjourn, Joe seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.