

Westmoreland Planning Board Minutes

August 21, 2023

Attending: Lauren Bressett, Tim Thompson, Bruce Smith, Liana Capra, Alison Fissette, Kristen Riley (Alt., clerk), John Snowdon (selectman), John Stronk (alt.). **Excused:** Larry Siegel
Lauren Bressett called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Review of Minutes 7/17/23

John Snowdon made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Tim Thompson seconded that motion. All voted in favor to accept minutes as written.

Other Business

Members of the zoning board attended the meeting to ask questions. Alan Bell feels the zoning board should be able to accept a variance for an ADU larger than 1,000 square feet. If the board can approve a garage larger than 1,000 square, Alan thinks that there should be more leniency in ADU square footage. Bruce Smith explained that ADUs were passed in 2012 for 30% of dwelling and the planning board increased it to 900 in 2021. Compared to most other New Hampshire towns, Westmoreland allows for ADUs to have a larger square footage. Lauren Bressett also said that the ADU cannot change the look of the house, as a single family home. Alison Fissette thinks that later down the line the planning board should consider reviewing the 2 family dwelling units or multifamily ordinances. Lauren Bressett added that ADUs must have the owner occupy one of the spaces, as allowed per state law. Alan Bell noted that by allowing leniency in ADUs, it would increase “workforce housing.” Lauren Bressett said that Westmoreland meets its workforce housing owned percentage, but does not meet its percentage on rental properties.

John Harris thinks that detached ADUs could bring revenue to the town. Lauren noted that assessors have added a minimal amount to the assessment for an ADU. She also advised that when the zoning board considers ADUs, they need to consider the fact that accepting the variance exception stays with the property, beyond its current owners.

Lauren asked the public attendees if the town should allow for more density. Mark Terry said there is a lot of unused land in Westmoreland. The town needs to find a way to allow for more building in Westmoreland, but within parameters. Homes should maintain the town's rural character in style. When asked what “rural” means to folks, terms such as open green space, dirt roads, minimal traffic, no close neighbors were suggested. Alan Bell also said there should be some latitude for the Zoning Board in interpreting the ordinances. Lauren Bressett said the ordinances are voted in by the town and thus are the stipulations set by the town. While the Zoning Board serves an important function for special circumstances where the ordinance

doesn't fit, it is specifically limited because the decision is being made by a board and not the full town.

Mark Terry thinks that communication is the biggest problem in this town and town volunteers need to figure out how to do so more effectively. The pool of people making the decisions is small because people are too busy to make it to meetings. Having video recordings of meetings for residents to go back to and watch might be something to consider.

Lauren asked if the zoning board has noticed other ordinances that they think would need tweaking. Alan Bell said alternative energy/wind power. Mark Terry said in the vast woods, someone should be able to have solar panels. Alan Bell mentioned that the current panel minimum is limiting. Bruce Smith said the master plan should ask residents if historical locations should be protected, like the town center or Park Hill, and write into the ordinances that those protected areas would not allow the same development.

New Business

Camp Sites:

Lauren Bressett explained that camps were voted as not allowed by the town. Campers are different and need review. A concern is how it would be enforced and by whom? Alison Fissette said the ordinances should better define the recreational vehicle terms. Lauren Bressett told the board to look for definitions for the next meeting. The September meeting will also be the hearing on the board's proposed procedural and regulation changes.

Notice of Revocation:

After clarifying the process with the town counsel, it was felt that the concerns expressed by the board are valid. These include the time that has passed - over 3 decades - that has seen changes in state laws, town ordinances and regulations, and best practices, in addition to the fact that the remainder of roadway was never completed and a bond to secure the development of the road was not maintained. The selectmen will be considering the release and discharge of the uncompleted portion of the road at their meeting tomorrow. It was unanimously agreed a notice of revocation of the uncompleted Phase III of Adams Farm will be sent to all abutters, Snowdon and Smith were recused.

Clerk Wage:

Alison Fissette made a motion to ask the selectmen to approve increasing Kristen Riley's pay to \$100 per hearing and maintain the \$25 per meeting. The funds would come from the savings of not having to put a notice in the paper per application hearings. Bruce Smith seconded that motion. 6 voted in favor. John Snowdon abstained.

Alison moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm. John Snowdon seconded that motion. All voted in favor.

Recorded by Kristen Riley, Clerk.