

Planning Board
Hearing Minutes for Ashfield Senior Housing Bylaw of March 8, 2014
Ashfield Town Hall

Present: Michael Fitzgerald, Chair (MF)
Alan Rice (AR)
Lauren Preston-Wells (LPW)
Ken Miller (KM)
Sarah Holbrook (SH)
Brittany Martin, Scribe (BM)
Ron Coler, Guest (RC)
Helen Boydon, Guest (HB)
Ann Yuryan, Guest (AY)
Jacquelin Burgin, Guest (JB)
Mary Fitzgibbon, Guest (MFi)
Nancy Garvin, Guest (NG)
Pricilla Phelps, Guest (PP)
Dan Phelps, Guest (DP)
Judy Haupt, Guest (JH)
Janice Howes, Guest (JHo)
Kathy Bunton, Guest (KB)
Robert Cherdack, Guest (RCh)
Wayne Wickland, Guest (WW)

The meeting is called to order at 2:06pm.

1. MF opens the hearing for the Senior Citizens Draft Bylaw. MF reads the hearing notice and gives a short history on Senior Housing development in Ashfield. MF states that there have been surveys done in the past to learn the housing needs of town citizens regarding senior housing. MF reads the Senior Citizens Housing Bylaw Draft. MF further states that the Planning Board is looking for input from the town residents on the boundary lines and that the lines that are presented today are because the Planning Board suggests that the proposed district be flat for pedestrian access.
2. MF states that there is a recording device in use.
3. Robert Cherdack (RCh) asks the Planning Board how many units are twenty-five (25) percent. MF states that that number was recommended by town council.
4. Ron Coler (RC) asks the Planning Board how many people want this type of housing in Ashfield now. MF states that as of ten (10) years ago, the vast majority of residents were interested in senior housing in town center. MF further states that the number of seniors in town is increasing.
5. Helen Boydon (HB) of Murray Road states that as she gets older, she is feeling more isolated, there is more responsibility to take care of her large home and she has no family in the area. HB states that if there was senior housing in Ashfield, she would be able to stay in town and keep the relationships that she has created here. HB further states that she has lived here about half of her life and is definitely interested in having senior housing in town center.

6. HB states that it's an issue of transportation.
7. Judy Haupt (JH) spoke in favor of the proposed bylaw.
8. RC asks Planning Board if someone has a multifamily house on Main Street, and they could get two (2) units in said house, could they turn that into a senior housing residents. MF states that yes that is allowed currently, but the Planning Board's intention is to have a building/house that includes three (3) to seven (7) units. MF further states that there would be a housing authority or an administrative body to oversee the units and to ensure that the units housed qualified seniors, fifty-five (55) years and older. MF states that if there are more than two (2) units, a special permit is required from the ZBA.
9. Ann Yuryan (AY), member of the ZBA, asks Planning Board why they are limiting senior housing to town center. MF states that the Planning Board has spent a considerable amount of time on that issue, and that the surveys that were collected regarding senior housing conveyed that town center was best. MF further states that if senior housing works well in town center, it may very well work in other areas of town.
10. Jacquelin Burgin (JB) states that a lot of people are interested in sharing housing that are not able to drive and cannot afford to live alone. JB states that she worked at the CDC and was involved with studies around this subject and because the range of ages and the different levels of care, she would like to see the district larger than the current proposed map shows.
11. Mary Fitzgibbon (MFi) states that there are already density issues in town center and that the sidewalk are not meant to drain well and aren't cleared well during the winter months, so the assumptions that town center will make it easier for the elderly isn't clear. MF would like to learn what percentage of housing units will upset the sewer budget.
12. Nancy Garvin (NG) states that some of the historic houses were built before 1850 and she would hate to see them changed or additional lots built with them. She would like to learn if the requirements for using a historic building for senior housing change so that the historic buildings aren't altered. MF states that that is something to be considered, and that the Historical Commission may be able to help the Planning Board with this.
13. Pricilla Phelps (PP) asks Planning Board if there will be a common facility for cooking and eating. MF states that there can be two (2) kitchens and twelve (12) residents under a single roof. PP states that rather than units having their own kitchen and dining area, some seniors may want to have those areas as common spaces.
14. JH spoke about the Louis House in Holyoke as a model.
15. RCh states that he has lived in Ashfield for three (3) years and didn't come to this town because he thinks it needs change. He further states that most people in town center do not want to see the character or the town change. RCh asks: do we feel confident that we would be able to hold to local Zoning and Planning powers? RCh states that it might be arbitrary and capricious to knock down houses and build a large facility. MF states that a business can come into town, knock down four (4) houses, if they have a market for it. MF states that this

doesn't happen for a variety of reasons.

16. Wayne Wickland (WW) spoke to a separate bylaw for sidewalk clearing.
17. MFi asks about 2E regarding mixed-use development.
18. Kathy Bunton (KB), Director of Senior Center in Shelburne states that she commends the Planning Board for writing this draft by-law. KB states that seniors are having a hard time and need someone to take the lead in this direction. She further states that if this bylaw passes, she thinks that she may be able to help the Planning Board. KB states that there are 'conversation cafes' held at the Senior Center in Shelburne, to express their thoughts and knowledge about senior housing. KB asks Planning Board if someone wanted to create senior housing units outside of town center if they are able. MF states that he thinks so, they would have to speak to the ZBA and would probably have to receive a special permit.
19. AY states that she doesn't want to see all of the seniors living in town center, because some days aren't pleasant in town. AR states that that is a good point and that the Planning Board started with town center because that is where the library, town hall, businesses are located, and that the terrain is flat.
20. WW states that he the age expectancy of people is growing, there has been a big change in our lifetime and that we are trying to hit a moving target. Working with the Council on Aging, he states that there isn't enough transportation and that he is trying to get enough drivers to get folks out in the winter months. MF states that the Planning Board isn't a housing authority and that the purpose of this proposed bylaw is so that it's easier for people to get to amenities.
21. MFi asks the Planning Board if they have discussed creating bylaws for other areas of town for senior housing. MF states that they did discuss other villages and that we may want to consider one village at a time. MF states that some of the verbiage in the draft bylaw for town center may not apply to other villages. MF states that it's difficult to protect other areas of town with one bylaw.
22. RCh states that if the seniors residing at a senior housing facility are integrated into the community and do not become divorced from it, that is to be commended.
23. MF states that if one of the houses on Meadow Lane was to add a large house, or if Paulette's house was considered, what do folks think about the size? MF asks guests if a nine thousand (9000) square foot building is something they want, no hands raised. MF asks guests if a five thousand (5000) square foot building is something they want, 8 hands raised.
24. Dan Phelps (DP) states that his building is five thousand (5000) square feet.
25. MFi asks Planning Board what the argument is for creating a district for senior housing rather than just a bylaw for senior housing. MF states that in town center, if this was the district, there would be sidewalks and access to town amenities. MF further states that if the bylaw is townwide then maybe the building could be allowed a larger square footage. LPW states that she would like to see the boundary line of the proposed district go to the four corners, AY

agrees.

26. MF states that the issue of senior housing has been the second most important issue for the last ten (10) years so the Planning Board would like to make some headway on it. AR states that if this draft bylaw is voted on and is approved, Ashfield residents would be able to take advantage of it and enjoy it. MF asked about extending the district to Meadow Lane, guests said yes, he then asked if it should extend to Baptist Corner Road, guests said yes; he then made a comment that he would contact Historical Commission and Sewer Commission about their involvement in this.
27. WW states that on April 14, 2014 there will be a meeting held at 1:30pm at the Senior Center in Shelburne, MA and there will be a lot of things discussed that will relate to with this proposed bylaw. Jim Hawkins will be available to talk about building code and how it relates to senior housing.
28. Planning Board thanks everyone who attended this meeting.
29. AR motions to adjourn the meeting, KM seconds and all vote in favor.

Meeting adjourns at 3:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brittany Martin, Scribe