

Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
Ashfield Town Hall
March 9, 2017
MINUTES

Present: ZBA board members Mollie Babize (Chair), Anne Yuryan, Kit Nysten, and associate members Faye Whitney, Susan Stark
Cathy Buntin, Director of the Shelburne Senior Center

Meeting called to order at 7:07 p.m.

1. Minutes of 1.12.17 were approved with corrections. Faye has been sworn in, so we are now a 5-member board.
2. ZBA report for Annual Town Report. We went over Mollie's draft, made some changes. She will rewrite.
3. Anne, Mollie, and Susan are going a conference given by the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative in mid-March and will report back on the sessions they attend.
4. Cathy Buntin came to discuss the way other nearby towns are approaching senior housing. We discussed our ideas for a plan for providing for senior housing in Ashfield. We want to come up with a different model from the one proposed by the Ashfield Planning Board (APB)—one that is better scaled to our small town. The APB's plan allows senior housing within the village center and permits only seniors to live in these units. We think senior housing should be encouraged rather than mandated, that seniors should be able to stay in their own neighborhood if they want to, and that provisions should be made for them to add apartments for family members or live-in help who are not over 55. We feel that we should provide incentives (perhaps a tax break?) for people to add accessory apartments to their homes rather than strictly limiting them.

As we discussed in our last meeting, we find the APB's bylaw to be unnecessarily complex. Certain provisions seem potentially unfair to landowners and their abutters, such as the requirement that any investment the homeowner has made in creating a senior housing unit must be reversed if they are unable to fill the apartment with someone over 55. Susan pointed out that the APB's plan proposes a deed restriction that will bind the parcel to senior housing even if the bylaw changes. In addition, provision for up to six units of senior housing could create undue impact on abutting property owners.

Cathy Buntin said that Buckland got a grant through FRCOG to do a study of how they could increase affordable housing, which could include senior housing. Towns need about 10% of total housing to be affordable in order to protect themselves from housing development that, according to Chapter 40B, could waive zoning requirements, Cathy said. Only 0.3% of Ashfield's housing meets the state's affordable criteria, one of the lowest in the state. The Buckland grant was a District Local Technical Assistance Grant from Mass. Dept. of Housing and Community Development. Mollie will contact someone from FRCOG about these grants, and also look for information about what other towns are doing. She will also contact the Greenfield Planning Board to find out more about their "tiny house" bylaw.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kit Nysten