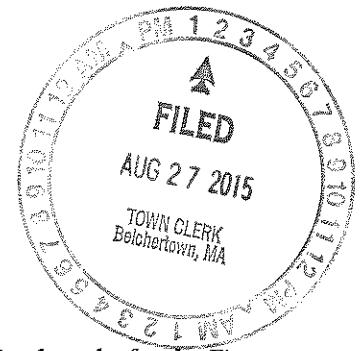


Belchertown Planning Board Minutes

August 11, 2015



Members: Daniel Beaudette, Christopher Laurenzo, Donna Lusignan, Michael Hofler;
Staff: Douglas Albertson - Town Planner, Susan Gay

Christopher Laurenzo, Chairman opened the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Herb Wood was here to discuss numbering signage of dwellings for safety purposes. Mr. Wood works for the Fire Department as a volunteer and said he sent a letter to town departments stating his concern about being able to find some addresses in town in emergency situations. He wants to find out if the board members have an idea of how to best go about getting homeowners to display house numbers. He said some addresses are a challenge for emergency personnel to find. He said he hadn't received feedback from his letter, and said likely there's no easy fix to the issue.

Mr. Wood gave some examples of how common driveways that are not supposed to be "named" are named. This creates a lot of confusion for the fire, ambulance and police personnel and gave examples. He said when a home is not numbered it makes finding an emergency extremely difficult. He said for example, safety personnel have to enter Hemlock Hollow to get to Oakridge Drive homes.

Mr. Wood said he has volunteered for years and reviews old and new addresses, and has put together ways and instructions for safety personnel, on how to get to addresses. He describes the "best way" to get to an address hoping it helps safety personnel. He said some of the newer fifty-five and over condominium projects have number systems that present a challenge. He drew on the chalkboard a layout of Summerhill condominiums (off Daniel Shays Highway) and how it is numbered. He said any confusion can cause delay in an emergency situation.

He had some suggestions: putting signs in the condo ways, such as North, South, Center, or if a two sided way, perhaps letters A or B with numbers. He said years ago safety personnel knew areas in town by long time family connections, but now with an explosion of population in Belchertown, and the fact that safety personnel are also new, there needs to be a more definitive way to standardize signage.

Mr. Wood said he would like to know if requiring a standard address number posted at each property driveway access from a public or private way might be in order. Perhaps a required standard "private way" sign, which would display all internal streets within and all address numbers within the area, might be posted at the intersection on a public way and otherwise. The board members went to the Zoning Bylaw section which note signage and numbering for houses. The board said the Fire Department does an inspection to make sure the fire detectors are in place in every new home may be a good time to bring up implementing the numbering of the home as well.

The board asked Mr. Wood for a few minutes to review the bylaw and see if they have any suggestions. They looked at some minor changes but kept going back to "enforcement" of the numbering of buildings. The board finalized their discussion by saying they are not an enforcement board and any change or issue with building signs should come from the Building Inspector, who is the zoning enforcement officer and has full charge of numbering of buildings.

It was noted that P. Adzima, Zoning Enforcement Officer sent a memo to G. Brougham, with copies to Fire, Police and Planner that he put in *The Sentinel* notices as well as on the local cable television, the need for proper numbering, in hope to raise awareness. Also he noted a mass mailing with tax bills will be sent to further remind people. Common Drive Associations will be sent notice of common drive requirements, and the possibility of fines for lack of compliance. The memo states a reminder will be sent on an annual basis to coincide with Building Safety Month.

The planning members noted that this comes down to an enforcement issue, and in that they are not the enforcement board, they have to pass on anything to do with this particular issue. Mr. Wood said he would follow up with the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

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D. Albertson, Town Planner noted that Universal Forest Products, Harris Way sent a request for an extension to their review period. They are requesting an extension for another month. A member asked if they were working with the Conservation Commission and it was noted they were. The board reviewed the schedule and agreed to a date for extension in September.

Motion M. Hofer to extend a review period for Universal Forest Products, Harris Way, at their request to September 30, 2015, Second D. Lusignan, Vote 4-0-0.

Zoning Board of Appeals application for a special permit by Kenneth Snow for 205 Jabish Street, to convert ½ walk out basement to a third apartment.

Board members reviewed the application for Mr. Snow and asked questions regarding the rental of the building. They wondered if the rental units had any issues at all, and D. Albertson noted he had not heard of any issues there. It was noted that the area was already a neighborhood of multi-family homes and that it conforms to the Zoning Bylaws.

The board read the narrative by Mr. Snow which stated the only addition of a light will be over the doorway to the proposed third apartment. There will be no change to the topography. The only item the board would like to see addressed is the signature as the deed states that Christopher Snow is also an owner yet his signature is absent. Otherwise the application and information is well prepared.

Motion D. Beaudette to recommend the Zoning Board of Appeals vote in favor of a special permit to Kenneth Snow for 205 Jabish Street, "to convert ½ of the walk out basement to a third apartment." It appears to meet Chapter 145-69, (a) Are found not to be detrimental to the established or future character of the Town and the neighborhood; (b) Will not nullify or substantially derogate from the intent or purpose of the zoning district in which they are located; and (c) Are in harmony with the general intent and purpose of this chapter. Conditions safeguards and limitations on time or use may be imposed when deemed appropriate. The Planning Board recommends the Zoning Board of Appeals obtain signature of owner of the property Christopher Snow. Second D. Lusignan, Vote 4-0-0.

A business questionnaire was discussed. This was a compilation of many businesses who answered multiple questions about how they were doing in this town and what they thought would improve their success in business. The board members discussed with Doug Albertson that he found the business respondents noted they want better phone coverage, faster internet, more parking and more publicity.

The board discussed their meeting with the Chamber of Commerce from Palmer about a year and a half ago and that they are very active and a good place to go for information regarding business. Zonta is another place to seek help and are active in Palmer, Ludlow and other surrounding communities, and they include Belchertown. Some business people note a need for a local business owner group. It was noted that someone may take an initiative to do a business group and they could be in touch with the Chamber of Commerce. It was also noted that many people work out of their home in town.

Spoke about advertising for restaurants to come to town as well. It was noted that with the pedestrian corridor discussion, form based coding system and state school project; they could all be put into a single comprehensive project. It could be something to work with and applied to the state school property as an undeveloped parcel. The parking, pedestrian access issues could be worked into where all could come together as a single entity.

Also the Chamber of Commerce is a support mechanism, business to business and support small business issues. D. Albertson noted that he would meet and bring up a "satellite" with Lennie Week and discuss having a forum in Belchertown.

Other: Doug Albertson sent the members an email regarding a proposed D.A.R.T. program. This is information for future climate change to the economy, and resiliency of areas to acclimate to new conditions. If warmer conditions prevail, people from New York may be moving this direction as well as people from the South moving upward. He said it would be instructed by an architect and would have a team doing intense forums, charrettes, overheads and break out groups.

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It was noted that the DART program consists of a six to seven thousand dollar grant to have someone come in (expert) to go over issues, emergencies and such. He wrote to Provincetown MA and hasn't heard back as yet. The coordinator is in Northampton and he will contact the person for some suggestions. This would handle worse case scenarios but also short case as well. They agreed that it's worth the application and investigation into the program. Doug will look into it for the board. He noted it may help in future planning of revising the Master Plan also called the Community Plan.

A new zoning map was also brought up. The board agreed that there is more pressure to have a mapping session, and people advising where things should be changed, etc. Doug Albertson said that FEMA maps also need changing and don't correspond to flood plains.

It was noted that it will be a tough road to redraw zoning maps, where to put high density housing, industrial, sewer, and so forth to be formed and lead to development. It was noted that a project such as rezoning can take as much as 10 years and would involve the whole town to develop it.

Note: July 28, 2015 minutes will be reviewed at a future meeting, as they are being processed.

Motion M. Hofer to adjourn, Second D. Beaudette, @ 8:40 pm, Vote 4-0-0.

