

STRATFORD PLANNING BOARD

Subdivision Regulations Public Hearing Minutes, 2018-03-20

1. MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Rachel O' Meara, Dennis Corbeil, Vicki DeLalla, Clayton Macdonald, Wayne Labatte, Harry Juergens
2. PUBLIC PRESENT: Charles Goulet, Rick Serven, Thomas Whelan
3. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 18:30
4. Rachel O' Meara began with introductory remarks about the draft subdivision regulations and the reasons why revisions are being considered at this time. The floor was then opened for public discussion and comment.
5. Mr. Whelan expressed concern about the provision to protect against premature and scattered development. He also asked if the Town has a Zoning Board of Adjustment, and if there an opportunity for appeal to it instead of Superior Court was available. In that regard, he emphasized the issue of cost to the applicant.
6. Mr. Whelan expressed concern about the 8% grade limit for new roads, and said it would make "large areas of the town" unavailable for subdivision. Mr. Goulet noted the safety issue associated with steep roads and the need for emergency vehicle access at all times.
7. Mr. Whelan objected to the requirement to establish an entity to take responsibility for the maintenance of new roads within a subdivision.
8. Ms. O' Meara suggested that we proceed by discussing the draft paragraph by paragraph. Mr. Whelan requested that each RSA mentioned in the draft be read aloud. Ms. O' Meara accommodated that request.
9. Mr. Whelan raised questions about the alternative of providing sprinkler systems for fire safety, and asked about the required water flows to make such systems work.
10. Mr. Serven inquired about minimum lot size and was joined by Mr. Goulet with concern about minimum road frontage. The concept of irregular lot shape was also discussed in this context.
11. Mr. Whelan and Mr. Goulet expressed concern about provisions to identify rare species if a subdivision would result in 10 or more new lots or be 20 or more acres in size. Mr. Serven spoke favorably about provisions to preserve natural assets.
12. Mr. Serven expressed concern about the 50 foot ROW provision to allow access to abutting lots, especially in view of no minimum for road frontage.

13. Mr. Whelan expressed concern about the requirements associated with conditional acceptance of roads, especially in view of the requirement that property owners benefiting from any improvements would be obligated to bear the costs of those improvements proportionately, and the possibility that the select board could force that obligation on property owners by a unilateral decision to conditionally accept a road. He pointed out that the effect would be to increase property owner costs.
14. Mr. Whelan expressed concern about the limit on the maximum length of dead-end roads. Mr. Serven suggested that some specified length was needed to set decision making parameters. Mr. Goulet generally agreed.
15. Mr. Whelan and Mr. Goulet expressed concern about the provision allowing the Board to hire an engineer of its choosing to check water, sewer, and drainage plans.
16. Mr. Whelan expressed concern about requiring utilities to be installed underground, noting the additional costs of doing so. Mr. Goulet noted that there are some instances where it is impractical to place utilities underground, also noting that placing them underground had benefits worth having.
17. Mr. Whelan expressed concern about state codes for installing manufactured housing and the difficulty he has in accessing the relevant regulations.
18. Mr. Whelan repeated his general concerns that the draft regulations create significant additional costs for subdividers and for the future owners of subdivided lots. He also asserted that the draft regulations were a backdoor to imposing zoning ordinances.
19. Ms. O' Meara thanked the public for participating. Mr. Serven thanked the Board for its work to prepare the draft and for the Board' s efforts to protect the Town' s future. Mr. Goulet joined Mr. Serven in offering thanks and noted the difficulties of the task.
20. ADJOURNED: 21:34, 5 | 0

Minutes transcribed by: Clayton Macdonald, 2018-02-22