

WEST TISBURY PLANNING BOARD MINUTES January 11, 2016, 5:30 PM

PRESENT: Ginny Jones, Leah Smith, Susan Silva, Bea Phear, Matt Merry, Henry Geller.

ALSO PRESENT: Marina Lent, John Powers, Joe Tierney, Doug Ruskin, Dan Seidman, Jane Rossi.

DISCUSSION:

Tiny Houses:

Ginny explained that Marina Lent had drafted a proposed zoning bylaw pertaining to tiny houses. Joe began by stating that the tiny house, displayed at the Ag Fair this past August, opened up a lot of inquiries. He explained to the board that currently, he can only approve a camping vehicle. He said that as long as the camper stays on wheels, it is covered in the bylaw. He said that a tiny house would not meet with the current Board of Health regulations. John Powers said the state regulations require minimum sizes for bedrooms, kitchens and bathrooms. Although there is no specific minimum size for a “tiny house,” zoning bylaws as well as state regulations limit the minimum size.

Dan Seidman said the idea is to come up with a way to avoid having to subsidize. Houses should either be on skids or on the ground for safety reasons (harsh weather). Owning a tiny house is a lifestyle choice and it should not be discouraged. Co-housing could be created where the owners pay to support the development, i.e., water and septic and/or a common area for showers or laundry. He said he attended a class regarding tiny houses; several 20 to 30 year old people in the class were interested in the concept. Henry stated that zoning and favoring a concept are two different things. Ginny said that perhaps some boat builders could be encouraged to join in on the idea. They can fit a lot into a small space very nicely.

Bea pointed out that, according to the survey, the town is not in favor of cluster zoning. The town has decided to create 3 acre zoning. Dan Seidman said that perhaps cluster zoning is the way to address the issue regarding the development of a “small house” community.

Doug Ruskin stated that it is the role of the leadership (town boards) to present these types of concepts to the townspeople. There is clearly a housing problem and we have to think in terms of the greater good. Marina Lent said that the price of land is a barrier.

Matt said that the bylaw would have to be modified to support a cluster of tiny houses. Marina was asked how many houses are in demand to begin with. She said probably 12 would be a realistic start. She also said they have received 755 signatures of those in support of the tiny house concept on Martha’s Vineyard. Most interested are the 20 to 30 year olds and the 60 plus age groups. Matt said that co-housing such as the Abrams developments are very similar to this concept. He wondered if the town should be asked to vote to subsidize a given project. Dan Seidman said that perhaps the purchase of the land could be subsidized. Ginny mentioned that

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the Flatlands, an area in town with badly fractured title, could be re-visited by the town. John said it was his understanding that the title issues have been resolved.

A discussion ensued regarding the lack of housing for summer employees. John Powers mentioned that many summer employees have to leave in August because their lease has run out. He said that perhaps dormitories would help to alleviate that problem. Susan mentioned that many wealthy people are purchasing houses to provide living space for their help.

Doug Ruskin said in terms of thinking differently, it may not be popular, but density is the issue. It is a matter of getting past the concept of fixing the problem. He said he felt that tiny houses would be popular and would fill up quickly. Someone has to make a proposal to do something big.

Matt stated that there were a lot of complaints at Town Meeting regarding the proposed affordable housing project by the ball field. He said the affordable housing concept is not popular. Doug Ruskin said the majority of people are willing to address the housing problem. He said the “not in my neighborhood” concept will not go away. Henry said he could envision apartment buildings that could be tastefully done. They could be located in town or in the woods. He mentioned that Nantucket is placing 320 mixed units in one neighborhood. Doug suggested that perhaps a new district be created, or, perhaps allow small lots in one area with shared septic. He also recommended that the board take a look at what is being done in Breckenridge, Colorado regarding affordable and workforce housing. Ginny said the root problem is the economy. Bea said that the board is open to any specific language changes to the current bylaw.

Building and Zoning Inspector Discussion:

Ginny asked Joe Tierney about the Barron/Murphy buildings behind the Field Gallery. She questioned their height. Joe said he would check on the height to make sure it is no higher than 30 feet. She also asked about the demolition of the buildings. Joe explained that it is his job to make determine whether or not a structure is salvageable. He said that one of the buildings was very old and falling down, and the other building, also not in very good shape, was offered to the Island Housing Trust. They declined having no current use for a building or means to transport it. The guest house had been demolished without a demolition permit so Joe said he had to pull their building permit. Ginny asked why the demolitions were not advertised. Joe said they are advertised only if they are salvageable.

Regarding enforcement, Joe explained that he has been swamped with applications and inspections and has requested an assistant. He said he has no time currently to follow up on enforcement which can be a time drain. He said he has appeared before the Selectmen with a request to hire an assistant to help alleviate the heavy workload. He is hoping for a qualified assistant who will work part time including afternoons and until 4:30.

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Swimming Pool Regulations:

Joe explained that the state swimming pool code and regulations have been updated and the code listed in the current zoning bylaw is out of date. He would like the new code to be listed in the bylaw. It was suggested that perhaps the language could read “current state code” so that the bylaw would not need to be updated every few years. Jane was asked to consult Town Counsel.

Bea pointed out that there are now 3 zoning bylaw amendments for the Annual Town Meeting; Special Ways, Special Places and Swimming Pool Regulations.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the January 4, 2016 meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

TOWN REPORT:

Jane was asked to shorten the town report and re-send to the board for review and approval.

REPORT FROM HENRY re: HPP COMMITTEE:

Henry stated he feels the committee is a good idea and will help the town to reach its state requirement of 10% affordable housing town-wide. He said the committee has received some concrete ideas and suggestions.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:50 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Rossi, Administrator