

DUMMERSTON TOWN BOARDS JOINT MEETING MINUTES

June 13, 2006

7:00PM

This special meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm at the Dummerston Town Meeting Space in the Center Church basement in Dummerston, Vermont.

In Attendance: Town Clerk Pam McFadden; Zoning Administrator Alan McBean; Lister Doug Hamilton; Cindy Jerome, Paul Normandeau, Kevin Ryan, Tom Bodett, and Lewis White of the Selectboard; Cindy Wilcox of the Planning Commission and the Development Review Board; Steve Mindel, Bob Wainwright, Elizabeth Catlin, David Ryan, and Corin Nelsen of the Planning Commission; Lew Sorenson, Pat Jaquith, Reg Rockefeller, and Rick Sullivan of the Development Review Board; Mary Ellen Copeland, Patti Smith, Bill Schmidt, Ed Anthes, and Charlie Richardson of the Conservation Commission, and visitors Roger Turner, Jody Normandeau, and Lynn Levine.

Tom discussed the acquisition of the old Moore gravel pit by SB Development. He related the principals' willingness to discuss the possibility of siting affordable housing on the property, after all of the material has been mined.

Much discussion centered on the desirability of moving forward with the development of affordable housing in town. Elizabeth, in the course of a general conversation about the very definition of "affordable housing," expressed concern that such properties could remain perpetually affordable. Paul noted that, at the outset, builders can't easily afford to make the business decision to build affordable housing without subsidies and/or incentives. Cindy W. added that the town now encourages, within guidelines, the creation of accessory apartments within existing homes. Kevin spoke about the details around the Homestead self-help housing program that built in Dummerston in the late 70s. Lynn commented that the State, some years ago, had been interested in divesting itself of the Dutton Pines property on Route 5, and that that might be a viable location for affordable housing. Paul expressed interest in contacting the State about the current status of that property, while Reg noted that the State now prefers to lease, rather than sell, such assets.

Bob updated attendees on the Planning Commission's progress in using past grants to digitize parcel maps and overlays. They have also received another grant, which they will use to project the future look of the town, and to enhance planning activities. Elizabeth reviewed how the PLATES project is focused on understanding Dummerston's natural and cultural landscape.

Lew spoke plans to publish a "Dummerston Operator's Manual" to introduce people to the Town's natural and functional resources. Information, much of which will be gleaned from the PLACE project, will be solicited this summer, with distribution of the Manual planned by Town Meeting Day. It was noted that Louise Zak has resigned from the DRB. Louise has accepted a position in Boston, and she was replaced by Rick Sullivan.

Bill distributed the Conservation Commission's Action Items, distilled from the Town Plan, and a sheet listing members and their brief bios. Various members further discussed wildlife habitat, vernal pool mapping and assessment, the Commission's new website (dummerstonconservation.com), the Nature Conservancy's new trail on Black Mountain, and the Raingarden established to handle water runoff at the Covered Bridge Park & Ride.

Alan gave a Zoning Administration update and reported that we haven't issued very many new home permits recently. He also will be looking for guidance in how aggressively the Town will want to enforce its zoning bylaws.

Tom gave an update on the Selectboard's goals, the continuing need to seek out new sources for gravel, and the 5-town cooperative that's organizing to bring wireless broadband Internet access to the unserved locations of our area. Paul reviewed the status and progress of the current gravel pit project, that the Zoning process is moving forward, and that the Act 250 hearing is scheduled for Thursday, July 6.

Pam spoke of her desire to have an official website for the Town. This could be used as a point of reference for people who call the Town Office for information. Kevin indicated that this is a “front-burner” issue for the Selectboard, and further encouraged all Boards to establish their own websites to disseminate information they found significant. Each Board would then retain complete control over the content and currency of their own web presence, while all sites could be seamlessly joined together, giving the functionality of a central repository for Town information.

Doug reported on the town-wide property reappraisal, and said that last Friday's public information meeting at the School was very well attended, and very useful, as well. Grievances will be received until June 19th. Doug said that, in most cases, people are very satisfied with the process, once they learn the methodology used and the resulting equity of the results.

Steve suggested – and it was generally agreed – that the School Board be invited to the next joint boards meeting.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kevin Ryan, Selectboard Clerk