

Public Hearing for Revisions to Town Zoning

Dawn Andrews, Rich Aronson, Kate Chatot, Jon Raynor, Karen Deasy, Gary Gulka, Ruth Goodrich

DAWN Andrews provided an introduction - Our goals as the planning commission were:

To simplify the zoning bylaws and make them easier to understand and use.

To write bylaws that address real conditions, current issues, and the way we live in our community and use our properties.

To avoid including rules that may make sense for larger communities but address problems that are minimal or non-existent in Cabot.

For example: We propose to significantly reduce parking restrictions, particularly for businesses, because parking problems seem to be more anticipated than real. More restrictive parking rules can discourage the investment that we want to encourage.

Process

We plan to draft, process and have votes on the zoning bylaws a section or two at a time to make it easier for the public to study and discuss and less overwhelming for us.

The parking requirements were reduced to be more in keeping with activity in the Village, The Economic development plan indicated that the Village zoning did not match the development.

A review of existing setbacks showed that only two properties in the district complied with the current setbacks. We put together samples showing the difference between the buildable area in the village currently and how the new requirements would affect landowners.

Gary reminded the planning commission that the old draft has many pieces to make zoning more complete. Cabot's current zoning is in need of a complete update.

Gary had some questions on how we planned to integrate the revisions into the existing zoning. Dawn indicated that we were discussing that prior to the hearing, the definitions will replace existing definitions new definitions will be integrated. Parking and the lighting sections will replace existing sections and the village sections will replace the existing village areas. Gary would like the planning commission as their next step to look at a total update incorporating some of the work from the prior draft. Gary would also like to see the board look at the exemptions and updating the development standards. It was discussed that our regulations need to reflect our community and not a larger community.

Gary provided a few grammatical corrections, he also suggested the language in accessory dwelling be revised so the regulatory description in the definition is included within the district language. He also wanted to discuss the definition on agriculture.

The Planning Commission had a discussion on agricultural uses and agriculture in the village at the earlier Planning commission meeting where they discussed changing the text to indicate that the need to pay a permit fee.

Ruth had commented that the language in Agricultural definition could be interpreted wrong and could be confusing. The planning commission reviewed their prior conversation indicating that they were going

to change the language in section 2 as follows. As the Definitions will be for all districts that the language should be more general. The last part of the sentence in item two will be changed to read "requirement for a permit fee will be determined by the state" .

The Planning commission agreed that the Agricultural definition should be more generic and will move the first exemption to the village zones. They also look at moving the regulatory language to the village zone.

Gary had a question on Signage asking about possibly adding exemptions into the signage section. He would like the board to consider adding more specific exemptions to the revisions. He provided an example on how coverage area was determined in the old draft, thought that allowing 50% of the front of the building to be a sign could be excessive. Ruth's business was discussed as an example Based on location and speed would 50% coverage of the front façade be bad? The Board discussed other examples of signage decided not to make any changes at this point. Discussed additional requirements and exemptions can be added as needed.

Ruth suggested possibly creating a way to simplify the requirements for the average user. Our current regulations are 40 pages approx. and revised updated regulations similar to surrounding towns are complicated and hard to find things in. It was suggested to present them in a way to point people in the right direction when they review the regulations, as most people have a hard time with zoning and how it works. An example was mentioned from the prior public hearing where a gentleman did not clearly understand how setbacks worked and that he was losing when a reduction of setbacks would require additional flexibility. Possibly a creation of a quick start guide. Discussed how people are suppose to find out who to speak to Peter Kopsco regional permit specialist reviews applications for landowners looking to complete projects and will let them know who and what permits will be required for any project at the state level. All commercial projects are required to contact him for review and are given his information when they come in for information and or to apply for one. The information is also on the town permit application. Another example is landowners within the town shoreland district are provided with our regional shoreland permit specialist as a state permit may also be required within that zone. Carl Fuller's information is also provided to all residential applications, state engineer for water and wastewater permitting.

Gary suggested that after the village zoning is done and complete that a review of remaining bylaw structure be reviewed to provide a better format for the regulations. The existing format is very similar to the first regulations adopted by the town back in the 70's

Next steps were discussed the board will revise the draft based on current comments and will post the new draft prior to the next public hearing on January on the 3rd. The board will then send a final draft to the Selectboard who will then hold a third public hearing prior to Town meeting day for a vote in March.