

TOWN OF WESTFORD
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MINUTES
Minutes for February 11, 2009 Meeting
Approved on April 22, 2009

Board Members Present: Ray Belair (Vice-Chair), Gene Hallman, Jason Hoover, Eric Jacobsen, Don Maddocks and Dick Heaps.

Board Members Absent: Tony Kitsos.

Also Present: Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator), Valerie Young, Craig McDonald, David Whitney, Dennis Briggs, Justin Charles, Alicia Cote, Douglas Cote, Michael Finn and Rick DiMeglio.

The meeting began at approximately 7:17 p.m.

Continued: Sketch Plan Review for a 15 - Lot, 14 - Unit Planned Residential Development & Major Subdivision– Craig McDonald

Craig McDonald and David Whitney, project engineer, were present.

David summarized the proposal and the DRB reviewed the staff report.

The DRB was concerned that the hypothetical density plan depicted building lots within deer wintering habitat and lots did not meet lot shape requirements.

The DRB said density would need to be proven prior to deciding whether a density bonus was justified.

David submitted prime agricultural and forest soils maps of the property and stated the proposed PUD lots would have little impact on important soils. David also stated the open space would be owned and managed by a home owner's association.

Ray asked why the open space was split between the front and rear of the property.

David said it makes sense when you walk the property. He further explained the open space in the front of the property is largely open. Therefore, protection of this area places dwellings behind a natural tree line which protects the rural character and aesthetics of Plains Road.

Furthermore, protection of the rear portion of the property preserves deer wintering habitat.

The Board agreed to revisit the issue of lot location after a site visit is conducted. The site visit will be conducted prior to the preliminary plat hearing.

The Board discussed whether it was appropriate for two of the lots to encompass deer wintering habitat.

David explained that the building envelopes on these lots would exclude the habitat.

The Board asked the applicant to propose landscaping and cutting restrictions, including cutting restrictions within the deer wintering habitat. The DRB also asked that street trees be depicted where there are currently no trees.

The DRB asked why the applicant was proposing individual driveways.

Craig said he has had problems develop between home owners sharing infrastructure.

Dick stated that Lot 2 and 3 do not meet lot shape requirements and asked for Lot 2's width to depth ratio.

David said the lot was 130' by 400'.

Dick stated that Lot 2 was very skinny and would only allow for 30' on either side of the house. David agreed that they haven't provided much wiggle room, but the layout was designed to conserve as much habitat as possible.

Eric asked how stormwater on the property naturally drained.

David said the property drains toward the wetland to the west. He added that the property has extremely sandy soils; hence there is a high absorption rate.

The DRB stated Class 2 wetlands will need to be delineated and depicted on the site plans.

David said they may need to apply for a State CUD permit, because they may impact more than 3,000 square feet of Class 3 wetland due to road construction.

The meeting was opened to the public.

Alicia Cote asked how the applicant could create 14 lots if the property was 40 acres and located in a 3 acre zoning district.

Ray explained that the applicant needs to prove 13 lots could be constructed in a conventional subdivision. If proven, the applicant is allowed to cluster those 13 homes to protect natural resources. Due to the protection of resources, the applicant may ask for a density bonus of one additional lot.

Dennis Briggs asked if the lots meet width to depth ratios.

David said yes.

Douglas Cote asked how building materials would be disposed of.

Craig said excess materials would go to the dump.

Douglas Cote told the Board the road was constructed in the summer and trees were cleared.

Ray stated that they do not have control over undeveloped parcels.

Craig explained that he took firewood from the property.

Ray stated that the subdivision will require either a fire pond or residential sprinkler systems under the proposed regulations.

David said that he would look into their options.

Justin Charles asked how close buildings could be to deer wintering habitat.

Ray said the town hasn't established a deer wintering habitat buffer.

Dick asked whether the Learned Drive Home Owner's Association had a leash law due to its proximity to deer wintering habitat.

Dennis Briggs said yes and Dick asked that the same language be placed in the covenants for the applicant's development.

Justin Charles asked whether each dwelling would have its own well.

Ray explained that the development will require a State potable water permit and the applicant will need to prove there is sufficient groundwater in the area by providing the well log data for the area.

The DRB decided to continue the sketch plan review and asked the applicant to submit a revised hypothetical density plan addressing the Board's concerns and a letter stating the reasons why a density bonus is warranted.

Jason MOVED to continue the meeting until February 25, 2009.

Eric SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 6 – 0.

Minutes of the January 14, 2009 Meeting

Gene MOVED to approve the minutes as amended.
Jason SECONDED the motion.
The motion PASSED: 5 – 0.
Don abstained.

Deliberations - Westford School District Property

Jason MOVED to approve the decision as amended.
Dick SECONDED the motion.
The motion PASSED: 5 – 0.
Don abstained.

Draft Sketch Letter – Pelkey Property

The DRB reviewed and revised the draft sketch letter.

Stowe Club Highlands Criteria

The DRB reviewed and discussed the Stowe Club Highland Criteria. There was a split decision as to whether the criteria should be implemented when reviewing subdivision amendments. The Board discussed requiring that “major” amendments meet the criteria and allowing “minor” amendments to be reviewed solely on their merits and the regulations. They asked Melissa to draft a list of “major amendments” which would trigger use of the criteria.

Gene MOVED to adjourn. Don SECONDED the motion.
The motion PASSED: 6 - 0.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:01 p.m.

Submitted by,
Melissa Manka, Planning Coordinator