**Town of Washington**

**Planning Commission Meeting**

**Monday January 24, 2022**

**Approved Minutes**

In attendance: Drew Beard, Judy DeSarno, Caroline Anstey, and Constance Bruce.

Chair Caroline Anstey opened the meeting at 7:01 PM. Members of the public were in attendance, including the Chair of the Architectural Review Board, Drew Mitchel, Zoning Administrator Steve Gyurisin, and Mayor Fred Catlin. Caroline moved to the first order of business which was the approval of the minutes from the November meeting. Judy moved to approve the minutes, Caroline seconded, and all voted in favor. Caroline then moved to the second order of business, adopting the agenda for the evening. Judy moved. Caroline seconded. All voted in favor.

The Planning Commission then moved to elect officers for 2022. Judy moved that Caroline Anstey, current Planning Commission Chair, retain her position. Drew seconded. All voted in favor. Caroline moved that Judy DeSarno, current Planning Commission Vice Chair, retain her position. Drew seconded. All voted in favor. Caroline moved that Drew Beard, current Planning Commission Secretary, retain his position. Judy seconded. All voted in favor.

Caroline then moved to new business: a discussion of a swimming pool ordinance. She said that Town had no existing swimming pool ordinance, and that in the past, swimming pools had been deemed by some Town officials as incompatible with a historic town. In her research, however, she had found that wasn’t the case. The Planning Commission had compiled a list of pertinent issues and concerns from research and discussions with citizens. Those had been shared in advance of the meeting with the new Zoning Administrator who had offered several suggestions/recommendations. Caroline suggested that the list be used as the basis of discussion for the evening and articulated each point, along with Steve’s comments.

Among the issues discussed at length by members of the Planning Commission:

1. Pools not to be overlooked by neighbors without consent. – Judy raised concern that such a requirement gave neighbors a lot of power in the decision. Drew asked Steve if there was precedent in his experience for such a consent requirement, and he indicated that it was not typical and would raise several issues related to the neighboring lot’s vantage point.
2. Pools should not be located in the front or side yard. – Caroline raised public concern that such a restriction would be an issue given the unique layout of Town. She recommended, and the rest of the Planning Commission agreed, that we allow pools anywhere on the property but stipulate they not be visible from the street.
3. Pool water removed from pools must be disposed of properly. – Caroline asked Steve what would happen to backwash water since chlorinated water was not compatible with the Town sewer. He was unsure and all agreed more research needed to be done on this topic.
4. All outdoor lighting and fixtures should be approved by the ARB and adhere to Dark Sky standards. – Steve suggested that Dark Sky standards be included in the ordinance. Caroline asked Drew Mitchel if the ARB already had the Dark Sky definition in their guidelines, but he wasn’t sure.
5. A pool in a commercial zone or a commercial use with a SUP should require a Site Plan. – Caroline asked Steve for more clarity on this point, and he indicated that there needed to be a distinction between commercial and residential pools with different requirements. All agreed.
6. Allowable lot coverage for pools 15-25%. – Caroline suggested that 15-25% seemed low and would be an issue given lot sizes in town. Steve agreed the topic needed more research and that those numbers had come from local requirements. Judy asked if the house footprint was included in area coverage. Steve said yes and that more modern standards exist with more flexibility for pool size and should be considered. Steve said the better question is accessory use (i.e. pool) vs. primary use (i.e. home) and establish a fare ratio. Caroline agreed and said a limit was needed but not 25%. She asked Steve to research further and establish a better percentage for town.

Caroline opened the meeting for public comment and questions. Mayor Catlin suggested we focus on the size of the pool instead of percent of impenetrable surface on each lot. Mayor Catlin also pointed out that the ordinance should list the six different zone types in town. Drew Mitchel agreed that ensuring pools were not visible from the street was important but offered alternatives to fencing that would also be a sufficient screen. Caroline agreed and said she expects the ARB to be responsible for determining types of appropriate screening. Drew Mitchel also offered that there were several water options available for pools other than chlorinated that could work for Town sewer.

Jeanne Kauffmann arrived at 7:35 PM.

Caroline closed the public portion of the meeting. She said that she and Steve would continue to research the topic with input from the ARB. The next steps will be to draft an ordinance and hold a public forum. Mayor Catlin clarified that the Planning Commission would recommend to Town Council for a public hearing but not actually host. Steve indicated that he would want to widely circulate the draft ordinance for review prior to public comment, and he further clarified that the next steps would be to hold a joint public hearing with Town Council at which point the Planning Commission would make its recommendation.

Caroline next moved to other business, notifying the Planning Commission that Town Council had requested they draft an ordinance for the installation of solar panels and relevant utility structures. Drew and Constance volunteered to research the topic for the Planning Commission and report back at a future meeting with their findings.

Caroline reminded the Planning Commission that next Monday, January 31, is the Public Meeting to discuss updating the Comp Plan. Caroline asked for ideas to increase turn out, and Judy recommended knocking on doors. Planning Commission members agreed and offered to help. Jeanne recommended having some type of flier or agenda to give people. All agreed that would be a good idea.

There being no other business to address, Judy moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:55, Jeanne seconded, and all voted in favor.

Signed:

Drew Beard

Secretary of the Town of Washington Planning Commission