**Town of Washington**

**Planning Commission Meeting**

**Monday March 28, 2022**

**Approved Minutes**

In attendance: Drew Beard, Judy DeSarno, and Jeanne Kauffmann. Zoning Administrator Steve Gyurisin was also in attendance.

Vice Chair Judy DeSarno chaired the meeting in the absence of Chair Caroline Anstey. Judy opened the meeting at 7:02 PM. She moved to the first order of business which was the approval of the agenda. Jeanne moved to approve the agenda, Drew seconded, and all voted in favor. Judy then moved to the second order of business, approving the minutes from the February meeting. Jeanne moved. Drew seconded. All voted in favor.

Old Business

1. Continuation of discussion on ordinance covering solar panels

Drew circulated a document to be used as a basis of discussion that included questions to consider as well as findings from the Zoning Administrator based on solar ordinances in surrounding communities.

Jeanne asked why we needed an ordinance for solar panels, as she was unaware of any plans in town for solar panels other than Mr. Akre’s properties. Drew responded that he had considered solar for his business and would likely pursue it in the future and that he knew of several property owners in town planning to install roof-based solar in the future.

Drew asked Steve what the process was for approving Mr. Akre’s roof-based solar panels, and he responded that they were merely included in the plans submitted for approval to the Architectural Review Board. Judy commented that perhaps the ARB should remain the only regulatory body for solar panels and that we didn’t need an ordinance. She asked Steve his thoughts. He responded that he had discussed the topic with six neighboring communities and determined that, regardless of whether roof-based solar panels were specifically covered by an ordinance, they were all determined to be accessory structures by-right.

The Planning Commission discussed at length the potential issues with roof-based solar in a historic community and concluded that whether or not they were deemed inconsistent with the historic fabric of the community, Town would likely be unable to prohibit them. Steve pointed out that the pace of technology, to include solar roofing materials, would probably eventually make the visual argument moot.

Drew then moved to the topic of ground-based solar panels, which he argued could be more of an issue for historic fabric and Town viewsheds. The PC discussed the possible locations of ground-based solar in Town and its implications for the visual aesthetic. Jeanne asked how many ground-based panels would be needed, but no one was able to answer. Drew suggested that since ground-based solar had the potential to be more impactful on Town, the PC should consider an ordinance governing that type of solar panel.

Drew asked Steve how broad he thought the ordinance should be for ground-based solar, and he suggested taking as similar approach to the pool ordinance, mandating that they not be visible from the street or placed in front or side yards. Alternatively, he suggested requiring a Special Use Permit for ground-based solar installations. The PC members present generally agreed that an SUP may be best.

Jeanne summarized that we should allow roof-based solar by-right with the ARB regulating proper installation/appearance, while any ground-based solar panels would require a more rigorous SUP process. Drew volunteered to pull together a draft ordinance with Steve’s assistance based on those conclusions to be presented for feedback to the full PC at the next meeting. All agreed.

1. Steve introduced another item of old business: a discussion of comments he had received regarding the proposed pool ordinance. They included:
	1. The Zoning Ordinance needed to be updated with a definition of “short term rentals”
	2. The mention of “underground structures” needed to be defined
	3. Clarification that ornamental structures containing water (such as bird baths and fountains) would be exempt from the height stipulation

There being no other business to address, Drew moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:58, Jeanne seconded, and all voted in favor.

Signed:

Drew Beard

Secretary of the Town of Washington Planning Commission