

## Minutes of the Focus Committee Meeting, June 27, 2007

Present: Bob Fichtel, Chairman; Pat Frederick Christina Sargent, Sallie Thoma, with Town Planner Eric Smith and Planning Board member Joe Kalagher. The meeting was held at the Stevens Municipal Building.

While waiting for people to arrive, Eric Smith handed out photocopies of two articles concerning small town commercial district planning and development.

Joe Kalagher explained the concept of “Form-based Zoning”: each zone has a “build-to” line, assuring uniform frontage of new construction. A general plan supplies guidelines for buildings, sidewalks, lighting, trees. This can involve overlay districts, and each neighborhood can have its own plan, conforming to local character.

Bob called the meeting to order at 4:14 PM, and handed out copies of the minutes of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. The minutes were accepted as submitted.

Eric recommended the Town should have a five-member board for site plan reviews. Christina, citing existing Town boards and committees’ difficulty convening a quorum at meetings, wondered if a new board would be viable.

Concerning the charette held on Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, Eric said we are still waiting to hear from the pro bono group that came out from Boston to guide the proceedings. Maggie Whitney, who attended the charette as local reporter for the Worcester Telegram & Gazette, has given Eric the CD with her good photos of the three proposed site plans.

Those who were present at the charette described the meeting to Sallie Thoma, who had been unable to attend.

Bob reported on his further exploration of the Lashua land on the Winchendon Road. He walked the property with Town Engineer Ouellette, who recommends the Town relocate the Highway Barn there. Mr. Ouellette is qualified to design a septic system for the property, and a Town public works crew could install the needed extension to the existing water main along Rte.12. This would help control cost.

Christina’s efforts to trace clear title to the property have been frustrating.

Bob moved we authorize the Town Administrator or Acting Town Administrator to negotiate with Kevin Lashua for acquisition of clear title to the land parcel 40C, Map 21, on the South side of Winchendon Road; and also pursue the possibility of acquiring a portion of parcel 40A, Map 21. Sallie seconded the motion, which was so voted.

Eric said the MRPC has a brownfields assistance grant application deadline coming up on July 21; if there is possible contamination of the property, perhaps we should apply. Reportedly, State environmental officials have examined the property, responding to a question whether toxic waste had been dumped there in the past.

Bob said Engineer Ouellette approves of the drawings for the proposed highway barn, with minor changes. We need to identify the square footage for the salt storage shed, and submit the data to George Allen, so he can draw a plan.

Mr. Ouellette had suggested to Bob that if the Town were able to acquire the Garlick property on Williams road, its acreage is sufficient to support a Town sewage treatment facility, in case routing sewage to Gardner's treatment plant ceases to be practical. The Garlick family has not responded to questions about their plans for the property.

The committee looked at GFA Credit Union's architectural drawings for the facade of a branch office taking the place of the white house they plan to demolish, next door to the hardware store. The committee then went outside to look at the house, comparing details of roof angle, windows, porch, etc. to the architect's drawing. It was agreed, the angle of the roof in the drawing was too wide to blend with buildings on either side, and the clerestory windows were inappropriate, as was the planned signage on the face of the gable end. Christina said we need to see the plan for the drive-through portico, to be located at the side of the building, visible from the street. She will e-mail or otherwise contact the members of the Historical Commission for their opinions of the GFA plan. They need quorum in order to issue an official opinion.

The Committee consulted a site plan of the hardware store and its unoccupied annex, to see if there were any way GFA Credit Union could locate its branch and drive-through window there, rather than razing the house next door.

The Committee needs to look into "Neighborhood Conservation District" designation.

Bob moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:34 PM. The Committee will meet next on Thursday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 PM. Tentative location, the Stewart room at the Library.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patricia H. Frederick