

Town of Sharon, Vermont
Planning Commission and Development Review Board Minutes
September 12, 2023
(As approved on October 10, 2023)

The meeting was publicly warned in conformance with the January 2022 amendments to the Vermont Open Meeting law requirements for remote and/or telephonic meetings.

Attending: John Roe, Sue Sellew, Paul Kristensen, Dee Gish, Lucy Gibson.

Future Meeting Dates – Mark Your Calendar

- Tuesday October 10th 7PM SPB/DRB Regular Meeting

John Roe called the Sharon Planning Commission to order at 7:06.

2. Sharon Driveway Permit Policy: The Commission discussed their recent experience with driveway locations in subdivision applications in the context of knowing that the Selectboard planned to modify to the Highway Policy and Driveway Permits policy dated August 2001. Most concerns were found to already be articulated in the Highway Policy, thus the Subdivision Regulations need to be updated so there is no confusion for applicants. Three major suggestions for the Selectboard are: 1) that maximum grades be defined over a particular distance, such as 100 feet; 2) that the Highway Policy be renamed the Highway and Driveway Policy and include that a Driveway Permit is required prior to any construction; and 3) that there be a provision for a variance, provided safety is not truly compromised, if topography prevents meeting the literal standard set out in the current Highway Policy.

3. Sharon Subdivision Regulations: The Commission discussed the Subdivision Standards, Initial Review, and Preliminary Review sections of the Sharon Subdivision Regulations. There was general agreement that the organizational structure of the Regulations created confusion for applicants because it was hard to understand what was going to be needed without reading the Regulations completely. The Commission felt that the Initial Review should be more accessible for applicants without professional help so that there could be a general discussion with the Commission about what were likely to be significant issues. However, given that other subdivision regulations in other towns were structured similarly to ours leads the Commission to believe our flexibility to rearrange items may be limited.

The following recommendations were generally agreed upon by the Commission:

10/16/2023

a) The standard for road grades should read no more than 14% grade over each 100 feet.

b) The terminology of Access permits should change to "driveway or highway access permits."

c) The applicants should be pointed to the on-line "Vermont Atlas" and the "Parcel Viewer" instead of the "USGS Maps" as resources to be consulted.

d) At the Initial Review stage, the sketch map of the subdivision did not have to be drawn to scale.

e) The proposed driveway or other access to each lot should be shown on the Initial sketch map.

f) The driveway or other access should have a permit from the Selectboard by the Preliminary Review and the location shall be shown on the Preliminary Map.

g) The Commission needs to discuss roads more. The current Subdivision Regulations say they constitute lot lines, while the Strafford Regulations say they don't. In Sharon, the consensus was the Tax Assessors specifically don't treat roads as lot lines. We expect that in general property deeds also do not treat them as lot lines. Any change here could be seen as major, yet it seemed like there should be some consistency of how the Town treats roads. This also applies to how roads are treated in terms of surveys, lot acreage calculations, and their status as rights of way not fee ownership by the Town.

h) The Commission needs to discuss how we can "bring" Section I subdivision standards into Section III reviews when all the standards are not "equal" in their implications to reviews of plans.

i) John will talk with Two Rivers Regional Commission, probably Peter Gregory, about how much guidance the Planning Commission can give an applicant in the Initial Review. This will inform the tone we set for that section of the regulations.

John and Sue will set up a document that can be edited by the group to start creating specific language suggestions to edits.

4. Approval of minutes: Dee made a motion to approve the 8/8/2023 Development Review Board Harrington site visit and 8/8/2023 Planning Commission and Development Review Board meeting minutes. Lucy seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.