



Town of Amherst, NH

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Barbara Landry Meeting Room
2 Main Street
Monday, April 13, 2020 6:30PM

1. Call to Order

Chairman Peter Lyon called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Attendees by Zoom conference call: Chairman Peter Lyon, Selectman Dwight Brew, Selectman Reed Panasiti, Selectman John D'Angelo, and Selectman Tom Grella.
Also present: Town Administrator Dean Shankle, Executive Assistant Mary Guild.

Other attendees and the public accessed the meeting via Zoom.

Chairman Lyon explained that, pursuant to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID19 pandemic and in accordance with his Emergency Order #12, this meeting is authorized to take place electronically. There is no physical location to observe and listen to this meeting. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, we are:

Utilizing Zoom teleconferencing for this meeting. All members of the Board have the ability to communicate during the meeting through this platform and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and if necessary, participate in the meeting by dialing 312 626 6799 and using a webinar ID of 624-178-228 or by using the link contained in the agenda posted at amherstnh.gov.

Notice of the meeting and means to access it were previously posted in accordance with law. If anyone has a problem accessing the meeting, please call 603-440-8248 for assistance. In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

All votes will be taken by roll call and for ease, in alphabetical order.

Lastly, the meeting is being recorded and will be replayed on ACATV.

2. Planning Board Interviews

Chairman Lyon stated that the interviews will take place in this order: Tracie Adams, Matthew Bemis, Cynthia Dokmo, and Tom Quinn. The applicants have all answered the ten written questions given to them last week, and the Board is in receipt of their backgrounds and letters of interest.

Tracie Adams:

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Tracie Adams explained that she would like some training in order to become an effective Planning Board member, if elected. She would like to have a mentor from the Planning Board to give her additional insight. She

also believes that becoming an alternate member would allow her to observe the Planning Board process over a period of time.

In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, Tracie Adams stated that she believes recusing herself would be an appropriate step if she was an abutter to a project or did not believe she could maintain impartiality.

In response to a question from Selectman Grella, Tracie Adams stated that she has a bit of experience reading blueprints and artist renditions. Her family has considered building a home in the past, which is where her understanding comes from.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Tracie Adams explained that she believes it is important for the town to maintain the character of the community. She believes there can be reasonable planned growth in a way that meets the needs of the town while still benefiting the town as well.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Tracie Adams stated that, after attending a couple of Planning Board meetings, she believes it was difficult for the perspective of the public to be heard and addressed by the Planning Board. She wants to be part of the solution to that issue. She believes Amherst is in a "perfect storm" of development and wants to make sure the public is incorporated into the process. She has a desire to serve her community in a meaningful way.

In response to a question from Chairman Lyon, Tracie Adams stated that she believes that there was a wonderful intent behind the IIHO, but that it allowed for unintended opportunities for developers. She is interested in being part of the process to see what will roll out as the next thing used to drive development in town and wants to make sure it has no unintended consequences.

Matthew Bemis:

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Matthew Bemis stated that he would like to work with the Planning Board to look at what will be in place of the IIHO for the future. He believes the town needs workforce and affordable housing, but that the charm and character of the town also needs to be maintained. He has some experience at a federal level that he believes will apply in this situation.

In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, Matthew Bemis stated that he will work constructively with Planning Board members, although he may not have spoken flatteringly of them in the past. He believes he will be objective in knowing when to recuse himself, as he has been on the board of a condominium complex in the past and recused himself when necessary.

In response to a question from Selectman Grella, Matthew Bemis stated that he has experience reviewing blueprints as part of the condominium board he was on.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Matthew Bemis explained that he believes the Planning Board needs to take negative and positive criticism well. Pushing

back from negative feedback tends to compound the problem. He is not against growth in the town but believes it should be done as the town wants. He believes negative feedback is a good way to hear what may need to be changed.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Matthew Bemis stated that his answer regarding not being interested in an alternate seat on the Planning Board, comes from the fact that he wants to be able to participate and make a difference, versus attending on the sideline.

In response to a question from Chairman Lyon, Matthew Bemis explained that there is a charm to the Village that he believes should be maintained, while also allowing for affordable and workforce housing in town.

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Matthew Bemis stated that, if not selected for a full seat on the Planning Board, he would be interested in helping in other ways. He could possibly help to communicate what townspeople want clearly and reconcile differences between that and the Planning Board.

Selectman Panasiti stated that, if not chosen for a seat on the Planning Board, the applicant may want to become involved in the Master Plan process that is upcoming.

Cynthia Dokmo:

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Cynthia Dokmo stated that she was a member and chair of the New Hampshire House Judiciary Committee in the past.

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Cynthia Dokmo explained that the Planning Board should go about determining what types of housing to encourage in Amherst by first determining what types it already has and if there are any gaps that need to be filled.

In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, Cynthia Dokmo stated that her prior time on the Planning Board predated the IIHO.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Cynthia Dokmo stated that she firmly believes the Planning Board needs to balance the right of applicants with abutters concerns. She believes that most townspeople that voice their anger are really just concerned about their homes and disruption to their lives. It is important for the Planning Board to understand and communicate to the public that it is listening and taking concerns into the decision-making process. If these items are understood by the Planning Board, it's not being communicated very well. There may be a different or better way to do things and that can sometimes be determined by listening to the negative comments as well as the positive.

In response to a question from Chairman Lyon, Cynthia Dokmo stated that she would help the Planning Board through the upcoming transitional period using her experience while getting up to speed on the IIHO. She has a temperament that is open to listening to criticism, and a calm personality.

Tom Quinn:

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Tom Quinn stated that his primary concern is that the Planning Board's processes are not being adhered to very carefully. He believes the process should also be a data-driven one.

In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, Tom Quinn stated that he is currently one of Attorney Mullin's clients in the Jacobson Farm case, but that, if he were to be appointed to the Planning Board, he would no longer be a client in that case.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Tom Quinn stated that he believes the general public saw disconnect between the Planning Board and the citizens during some of the meetings. He believes that public concerns regarding the idea that some of these projects would have no adverse impact on adjacent properties or the town in general fell on deaf ears. In his opinion, the rude and condescending tone taken by certain Planning Board members was one that showed the public was not being listened to.

In response to a question from Chairman Lyon, Tom Quinn explained that he may think differently from some of the Planning Board members but that he is not an unreasonable person. He will listen and follow the procedures without any particular agenda. Every Planning Board member can have differing opinions, producing better results. He stated that he believes that the two current alternates on the Planning Board, Brian Coogan and Christy Houpis, should be promoted to two of the full seats, as they have current experience.

In response to a question from Selectman Grella, Tom Quinn stated that Section 3.18 requires certain data to determine if there is an adverse impact to the proposed health, safety, or welfare of the town. He isn't sure how the Planning Board can make these determinations without first having data. It should not be up to homeowners to alleviate risks for themselves and the town, such as through water testing; it is up to the Planning Board.

Chairman Lyon thanked each of the applicants for their time and willingness to volunteer. He stated that tomorrow, Tuesday night, the Board will hear from Jamie Ramsay, Bill Stoughton, Anthony Yakovakis, Christopher Yates, and Brian Coogan.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to adjourn the meeting at 7:27pm.

By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: April 14, 2020

SIGNATURE ON FILE

05.26.2020

Selectman Reed Panasiti

Date