

Newcastle Planning Board Meeting
Clayton V. Huntley Jr. Fire Station • 86 River Road • Newcastle

Thursday, November 17, 2022
6:30 PM

MINUTES

Board Members Present: Ben Frey – Chair, Peter McNaughton – Member, Kevin Houghton – Member, Lee Emmons – Member, Lucas Kostenbader – Member (arrived at 7:02PM)

Staff Present: Isabelle Oechsle – Town Planner

1. **Call to Order & Introductions:** Chair Ben Frey called the meeting to order at 6:31PM.
2. **Review of Minutes: October 20, 2022:** Lee Emmons moved to accept the minutes of the October 20, 2022 meeting as drafted. Ben Frey seconded, and the motion carried 3-0-1, with Kevin Houghton abstaining due to absence at the referenced meeting.
3. **Applications:** None.
4. **Public Comments:** As no members of the public were present, no public comments were provided on this item.
5. **New Business:**
 - a. **Discussion of Draft Memo & Findings of Fact Templates:** Isabelle Oechsle provided a brief overview of this item, which is being provided as a result of discussions that occurred during the previous meeting about expected work products of the Town Planner in relation to development review projects. The draft memo will be the Planner's recommendation to the Board based on her review of the project against all relevant standards. The Findings of Fact will serve as the legal basis for approval of a project. Isabelle will provide recommended Findings of Fact for the Board to consider (based on her review) and they can either adopt them as written or revise them based on their own reviews.

Isabelle noted that she would eventually like to discuss with the Board standard conditions of approval that will be applied to all projects in order to underscore various standards of review or to remind the applicants of otherwise agreed upon site/building improvements.

Ben Frey asked why the templates proposed wordy findings instead of simply having checkboxes that a standard was met. Isabelle responded that she is typically in favor of a sentence or two explanation so that any staff member or member of the public in the future can pick up a file and understand the discussion that the Planning Board had around a project and understand how they came to their decisions.

In general, the Board was supportive of the templates as written but requested a checklist or brief summary at the beginning of the memo of what standards are applicable, which have been met, and which have been flagged that will require additional discussion or review by the Planning Board. It was agreed that this would help expedite their reviews of the memo and of projects. Isabelle responded that she would revise the memo as noted and would send it to the Board as an informational item for the next meeting.

- b. **Discussion of Draft Planning Board By-Laws:** Isabelle summarized this item, which also arose out of a discussion from the previous meeting. Board members provided edits, including:
 - i. Related to attendance (on page 2), the Planning Board should vote to provide a recommendation to the Selectboard on whether or not to remove the member rather than the member being automatically removed by the Selectboard.
 - ii. Related to public hearing timeframe (on page 3), the Planning Board decided on a five minute speaking time, noting that the Chair could allow people to continue if needed
 - iii. Related to considering new business after a certain time (on page 4), the Planning Board requested that they not consider any new business without a vote after 8:30 rather than 9:00.

Lee Emmons moved to adopt the Planning Board By-Laws as revised during this meeting. Kevin Houghton seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

- c. **Continued Discussion of Development Review Process / Timelines:** Isabelle provided a brief follow-up to the discussion had at the previous meeting regarding her recommendations for revising the development review process and timelines. Isabelle noted that if Planning Board members have not yet reviewed her memo on this (included in the previous meeting packet) that they should do so and come prepared with comments to the next meeting, where Isabelle will provide draft amendments to the Core Zoning Code related to the development review process for members to review.

Ben Frey also suggested that the Planning Board should have a discussion around a timeline for tackling their previously identified amendments to the Core Zoning Code and other policies. Isabelle responded that she would put together a draft work plan, based on the Board's list, for discussion during the next meeting.

- 6. **Planner's Report:** Isabelle will add this item to upcoming agendas to report out to the Board items that may be upcoming or to report on things that she has been working on. Since they last met, Isabelle has been updating both the Planning Board and the Planning Department website to be more up to date / current on policies. Additionally, the CEO, Ben, and Isabelle have been collaborating on updated application forms which should be available in advance of the next meeting.
- 7. **Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned without objection at 7:28PM.