



**Town of Berwick
Board of Selectmen / Planning Board / Board of Appeals
Special Meeting for all Boards
November 21, 2013
6:30 P.M.**

I. ROLL CALL AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CAL TO ORDER: 6:30 P.M.

Board Members Present:

Board of Selectmen: Selectman Haley, Selectman Ganiere, Selectman Crichton

Planning Board: Ken Porrier, Frank Underwood, Paul Boisvert, Chairman John Higgins,
Judy Burgess, Niles Schore, Art Reams

Board of Appeals: None in attendance

Others Present:

Town Manager Patrick Venne, Code Enforcement Officer Joe Rousselle, Town Planner John Stoll

II. PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Planning Board Chairman John Higgins commenced the meeting and asked each board and staff member in attendance to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Town Manager Patrick Venne introduced the purpose of the meeting as he understood it and no corrections were made. The purpose was explained as a chance to discuss issues face to face.

These introductory remarks were followed by a succession of comments from all board members, and some staff, in attendance, as follows:

Frank Underwood indicated that a lot was happening in Town, and the Town needs to start working on Town Meeting issues and warrant articles at this time. He specifically referenced the Planning Board's role in presentation of master plan amendments. Mr. Underwood further noted that the Selectmen's agendas are awkward and less than ideal for members of Town committees

to make presentations or provide updates during, because of the placement of that agenda item in terms of its position on the agenda. Mr. Underwood suggested that a new category, for "Special Guests and Committee Reports" be added to the beginning of the agendas.

Paul Boisvert spoke about placing a television in the Town Hall lobby with a continuous information stream being displayed by BCTV, which may be willing to donate equipment.

Selectman Ganiere indicated he thought this was a good idea as a good way to improve communications, and mentioned that the Selectmen have already discussed it.

Chairman Higgins indicated the Town could expand this approach to include emergency notifications and school closings. He then brought up the issue of exploring an electrical code for the Town and a discussion related to what additional issues this may raise ensued.

Judy Burgess spoke about engaging the youth and added that an electrical code is not something she is against per se but she is against higher costs. She indicated that higher costs could come from the need to have someone inspecting new work to make sure it was code compliant, and suggested the Board of Selectmen would have to think about this issue because our Code Enforcement Officer is not an electrical code inspector. Ms. Burgess also said that the type and nature of communications between boards is a matter which lies with staff.

Niles Schore asked the Board of Selectmen what its vision for the Town is. He also spoke about Town board communications. Mr. Schore asked what the Board of Selectmen could do to foster leadership in terms of the Town's vision.

Art Reams inquired about how we ensure collaboration to restore the downtown area.

Chairman Higgins spoke about an apparent perception he has become aware of that some members of the public think the Planning Board doesn't want business. He further indicated that he does want business, with vested interests. Mr. Higgins mentioned that the Board of Selectmen has the responsibility of fostering business. Mr. Higgins closed by opining that bigger business is not better business.

Mr. Underwood suggested that the Board of Selectmen's goals and objectives be shared with the Planning Board. One such goal, Mr. Underwood mentioned, was to become a business friendly certified community. He mentioned the possibility of a building services committee in relation to the former Estabrook School, CMP Substation on Route 236, and the Town's former Water Treatment Plant on Rochester Street. Mr. Underwood also said that a Budget Committee could serve as a second set of eyes on warrant articles for Town Meeting.

Mr. Reams indicated that marketing the Town's desired sort of growth is not done enough.

Chairman Higgins stated that it is important for the Town to be approachable and to that end the Town should put past issues behind it. He stated further that the Town should support small businesses, and a belief that applicants may not be getting this message. He also mentioned that BCTV is underutilized and that the Town needs the involvement of its youth.

Paul Boisvert disagreed that the Town is not business friendly. Lots of trades people work in the R3 Zone, he indicated. What the Town is lacking, Mr. Boisvert said, are small shops. The elephant in the room is across the street from Town Hall, he mentioned, suggesting property located in the downtown area. Mr. Boisvert said the Town needs to control what happens there. He also referred to form-based codes when re-emphasizing that the number one priority in Town would be to control the site to which he referred a moment earlier.

Ms. Burgess said that the current ordinance didn't come easily, so people are hesitant to change it. She mentioned that the ordinance is an evolving document, however, that the Town needs to update. She indicated her remarks were not intended to advocate for re-doing the entire ordinance, but simply to suggest the Town should look at the regulations, specifically for businesses and where they are allowed. Ms. Burgess compared Berwick to other Towns and said that Berwick's regulations may be too restrictive downtown. She mentioned that it could be a public relations problem to change them, though. Ms. Burgess followed this statement with a comment about the need for public education on these matters, for which she suggested television might not be best suited.

Mr. Boisvert indicated that the television could explain things like what a conditional use is, for the public.

Ken Porrier stated that with respect to an electrical code, he did not think additional fees were a good idea.

Chairman Higgins stated that the Town should have an emergency management plan and it should be shared with the public on the Town's website.

Ms. Burgess confirmed the Town does have a plan.

Chairman Higgins suggested making an informational video document on the plan, as well as land use information, to put on the Town's website because, in his opinion, the Town needs to be more user friendly.

Ms. Burgess and Mr. Stoll discussed public records related to email chains with Mr. Venne.

Mr. Ganiere spoke about the rural character of the Town and his desire to maintain it as his vision. He indicated it would be good to concentrate business downtown, and slow residential growth.

Ms. Burgess said this highlights the need to use the Town's Land Use Ordinance to govern growth. She further spoke about a future meeting, comprehensive plan processes, land use ordinance updates, and necessary warrant articles for Town Meeting.

Selectman Haley indicated the Board of Selectmen's role is leadership in implementing the collective Town vision and not its own. He also said that BCTV has come a long way in two years.

Selectman Haley asked whether these sorts of meetings should be held quarterly and the consensus was that it should be so.

Mr. Underwood again brought up the need to focus on Town Meeting warrants and Mr. Venne indicated that if the Planning Board had a warrant article in mind they could be given to him.

Ms. Burgess indicated that people were worried about taxes.

Mr. Boisvert indicated that investing in the downtown now will lower taxes in the future.

Ms. Burgess mentioned that the Pease air base investment has paid off over time.

Chairman Higgins closed the workshop and thanked the Board of Selectmen for its attendance.

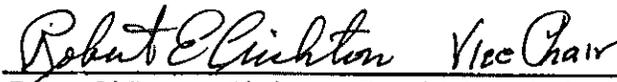
III. ADJOURMENT

The workshop ended at 7:55 P.M. by action of the Planning Board Chairman.

The November 21, 2013 BOS Meeting Minutes

Signed as approved at the Board's December 3, 2013 Meeting

On behalf of the Board


Robert E. Clifton Vice Chair
Bryan O'Connor, Chairman, Berwick Board of Selectmen