

Community & Economic Development Committee
Thursday, December 9, 2021
The Lodge at Poland Spring Resort - 6:30 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Poland CEDC meeting for January 6, 2022, was called to order at 6:36 pm, by Vice-Chair Cyndi Robbins. The Vice-Chair, as well as members, Sheila Foley and Stacey Bsullak, are present. Chair Jennifer Letourneau, members Raymond Cloutier, Norm Davis, Chrissy Kimball, and Alternate Bill Eldridge are absent. The Chair is attending the Budget Committee meeting which was scheduled for the same day/time. The minimum quorum is four members, so no votes will be taken at this meeting.

Public Attendance: Recording Secretary Alex Sirois, Code Enforcement Officer Scott Neal, and Planning Board member Cheryl Skilling.

WORKSHOP

Downtown Design Standards Workshop with the Planning Board

- Vice-Chair Cyndi Robbins welcomes Code Enforcement Officer Scott Neal and Planning Board Member Cheryl Skilling. She reminds them that the Committee's goal is to make Poland more business-friendly. She also informs them that one of the most significant proposed changes was something Scott suggested, which is treating both downtowns differently. She also reiterates that the CEDC was tasked with reviewing these standards.
- Member Sheila Foley briefly recaps the Committee's progress with Amy Segal from Sebago Technics. A major point of discussion is looking at possible changes that might make the Town more attractive in the long run. After studying the Downtown Design Standards the Committee learned Poland is pretty restrictive compared to other towns of similar size. She explains how other towns have a more liberal approach and use guidelines as opposed to standards. The Committee thinks Poland could benefit from using a combination of both. Another useful item other towns are using is photos of specifics directly in the ordinance, making it easier to interpret and understand. She shares that she recently met with her engineer for an upcoming project she will be doing, and they found the standards challenging to follow, specifically with regard to landscaping requirements. Basically, she thinks the downtown design standards need more flexibility.
 - Scott Neal informs her that landscaping can be waived. Some of the downtown design standards can be waived and some can't. He is concerned that the proposed language "strongly encourage" doesn't carry much weight. If a designer is given the option to meet a standard they are not going to do it. They often take the cheapest option. The use of shall and should is pointless, in his opinion.

- Code Enforcement Officer Scott Neal informs the Committee that he has only had two complaints about the standards since he started working for Poland.
- Cheryl Skilling suggests amending the standards so that it is more use-dependent. For example, maybe a school doesn't need a pitched roof. She also suggests waivers dependent on building size.
 - Code Enforcement Officer Scott Neal suggests leaving the standards as is but allowing the Planning Board to grant waivers for all of them.
- Vice-Chair Cyndi Robbins is all for keeping Poland, Poland, but she doesn't want to see businesses scared away because of excessive requirements or intimidating rules. The process needs to be easier and simpler. She agrees with Sheila and thinks photos or diagrams will make a big difference in making the standards easier for the average person to understand.
 - Cheryl Skilling likes the idea of using photos in the standards.
 - Scott Neal thinks that most designers and architects do not have a problem understanding the standards.
 - Cyndi is concerned that a small "mom and pop" style business might not make it to the point of hiring an architect or engineer in Poland because the standards are too difficult to grasp. Cyndi wants to make it clear that she wants to make it easier for smaller local businesses to establish and grow in Poland.
- Member Sheila Foley also states that Amy also mentioned the idea of slimming the standards down to reduce the amount of time it takes for a professional to create a plan that meets all of the requirements. This would cost the applicant, and businesses less money.
 - Code Enforcement Officer Scott Neal asks why Amy Segal didn't draft possible changes to the standards.
 - Sheila informs him that she asked the Committee to begin to create notes on what they would like to focus on for changes before she spent time making amendments. She would use the Committee's ideas to start a draft of what she would suggest for changes. We have not reached that point yet.
 - Recording Secretary Alex Sirois reminds the Committee that he did discuss the next step with Amy and she had suggested transitioning the project to Jim Seymour and the Planning Board for amendment drafting.
- Planning Board Member Cheryl Skilling does not think the current standards allow for a lot of variation. She has felt this way since she joined the Planning Board. She does not think that traditional New England-style architecture allows for a lot of variation and creativity. She does not think what is currently being done is working. She has been in Poland for thirty years and the downtown is virtually unchanged. She would like to see some changes.
 - Code Enforcement Officer Scott Neal thinks this is due to the lack of sewer in the downtown area of town.
- Member Sheila Foley informs Cheryl and Scott that the Committee is exploring some other ideas for lighting and beautification of the downtown.

- Member Sheila Foley asks Cheryl and Scott if they feel they have a better understanding of what the CEDC is looking for, and they both say yes.
- Vice-Chair Cyndi Robbins asks what the next step is. She is wondering if Cheryl can bring this back to the Planning Board and see if a follow-up workshop can be scheduled, maybe with better attendance.
 - Cheryl thinks it needs more attention, and the more people involved, the better.

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- Due to a lack of quorum, the minutes for December 9, 2021, will be voted on at the next meeting.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

None

REPORTS

Financial Report

- Due to a lack of quorum, the financial report for December will be voted on at the next meeting.

Planning and Development Report

- No new businesses were registered by the Planning and Development Office since the last meeting.
- No new Site Plan Applications were approved by the Planning Board since the last meeting:
- The following commercial building permits were received by the Code Enforcement Office since the last meeting:
 - Fairlawn Golf Course submitted a permit application to install a new hood system at 388 Empire Road with an estimated construction cost of \$23,100.

COMMUNICATIONS

None

OLD BUSINESS

Budget

- The Chair Jennifer Letourneau is presenting the CEDC budget and the Budget Committee meeting this evening.

NEW BUSINESS

Explore + Discover Guide

- Vice-Chair Cyndi Robbins reminds the Committee that the CEDC did an ad last year, and she thinks it is a great idea to remind everyone that Poland is a place to visit.
- Due to a lack of quorum, this agenda item will be voted on at the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

February Meeting Location

- The Budget Committee may still be meeting in the conference room for the regularly scheduled February meeting date. The Committee will need to find a new location or a new date.
 - The present members decide to hold the meeting on the following Thursday, February 10, 2022, in the town office conference room.

Snowshoe Event

- Member Sheila Foley would like to do a full moon snowshoe event in February, possibly Saturday the 12th, at Poland Spring Resort.
- Vice-Chair Cyndi Robbins thinks this is a great idea. She can do hot chocolate and find someone to make cookies.
- Member Stacey Bsullak suggests a fire.
- Sheila is wondering if they might be able to find someone to donate skis/snowshoes.
 - Cyndi suggests meeting with Scott Segal.
- Cyndi's only concern is parking.
- Sheila suggests starting sledding around 3 pm.
- The event will be promoted via Facebook. Sheila suggests creating a banner similar to heritage day.
- Sheila suggests reaching out to the football boosters or project grad.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourns at 7:43 pm.

Recorded by: ALS

Accepted on: February 10, 2022.