

MINUTES OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE 1-10-2011

The meeting was called for 7 pm in the Town Hall. Present were Dedun Ingram and Stephanie Brown, co-chairs; Craig Brooks, Tom Collins, Kathy Flaxman, Lees Hartman, and Linna Barnes, Council liaison.

No members of the public were present.

Minutes of the December 15 meeting: Linna moved to accept as distributed. Seconded, passed without dissent.

A toast was raised in celebration of the completion of a draft of the Land Use Handbook.

Stephanie announced that due to increased responsibilities in other areas, she is stepping down from the committee.

Dedun passed out a list of proposed committee projects for the Spring. Linna was asked whether the Council had any priorities. A review of driveway issues particularly regarding shared driveways (including how the one driveway regulation should be applied and feasibility/desirability of allowing abandonment of a shared driveway) is one priority.

Front-yard hedges: The committee discussed the Town's current regulations concerning front-yard hedges. Front-yard hedges are currently allowed in the Town but require the Town Manager's prior approval and must be maintained so they are at least 2 feet away from the public right-of-way and less than 3 feet in height (some old hedges are grandfathered in with different setback and height limitations). The Committee concluded that the current policy of having the Town Manager approve/disapprove proposed front-yard hedges should stand, but that more enforcement of hedge setbacks and height limitations should be implemented. Further, the Town should limit the types of shrubs that can be used in front-yard hedges to those that do not have a mature size that will make it impractical/difficult to maintain the hedge at the mandated height. When the limitations are not enforced, the hedges not only detract from the Town's open space policy but also interfere with resident's health, safety, and welfare because they impede pedestrian and vehicular movement, line-of-sight, etc. It was suggested that the Town should maintain a list of existing front-yard hedges, date they were approved, etc. This would assist Town staff in conducting periodic checks (for example, after the spring growth spurt and in the fall) to assess compliance with setback and height limitations. Taking an active enforcement approach, rather than relying on resident complaints, should also improve compliance and the public's health, safety, and welfare. The Council could perhaps provide guidelines to the Town Manager.

Section 4-52 revisions: The Committee began reviewing building code section 4-52 (Structures, walls, fences, earth berms, trees, hedges, shrubbery and other plant growth on private property). These regulations are confusing and not always consistent. A number of clarifications were proposed. Members were asked to look at the section more closely before the next meeting with the goal of determining intent of some statutes and rewriting for clarity.

Driveways: The Committee will begin discussing issues pertaining to shared driveways at the February, meeting and try to gather information about the different types of shared driveways in the Town and consider various ways to handle issues related to them. Linna will ask Dave Walton to attend and ask him to prepare a list of shared driveway issues Town staff is aware of.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20.

Next meeting: Monday, February 14 (?)