

APPROVED

TOWN OF PELHAM
PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
July 1, 2019

Chairman Roger Montbleau called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00pm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Acting Secretary Paul Dadak called the roll:

PRESENT: Roger Montbleau, Blake Clark, Paul Dadak, Jim Bergeron, Selectmen Representative Hal Lynde, Alternate Paddy Culbert, Alternate Bruce Bilapka, Planning Director Jeff Gowan

ABSENT: Cindy Kirkpatrick, Tim Doherty, Alternate Derek Steele, Alternate Samuel Thomas, Alternate Richard Olsen

Mr. Gowan noted he had heard from Ms. Kirkpatrick who was away and from Mr. Thomas who was in a Water Commission meeting and hoped to join the Board.

Mr. Montbleau appointed Mr. Culbert and Mr. Bilapka to vote.

MEETING MINUTES

June 17, 2019

MOTION: (Bergeron/Lynde) To approve the June 17, 2019 meeting minutes as amended.

VOTE: (7-0-0) The motion carried.

PRESENTATION

Presentation to the Board by Sara Wrightsman, Director of the Seacoast Workforce Housing Coalition documenting the Housing Charette that was held last month on the 21st and 23rd of May. Sara will show photos of the event along with the renderings prepared by the Charette Team depicting various housing types and theoretical project layouts. She will be joined by several participants of the Charette team including George Reagan from the New Hampshire Housing Authority. Also expected to attend are Peter Francese and Jay Childs, the demographer and documentary film maker of Community and Consequences, the Unbalancing of New Hampshire's Human Ecology and What We Can Do About It. Following the presentation there will be a robust discussion between the Board's guests, its members and the attending public who will be invited to offer opinions and questions when the Chair opens the public input portion of the meeting.

Ms. Wrightsman came forward with Michael Castagna of Castagna Consulting who is the Treasurer of the Seacoast Workforce Housing Coalition. She informed that Jay Childs and Peter Francese were present and working on the sequel to the short film 'Communities and Consequences' by including the activities and actions of Pelham in that process. Ms. Wrightsman provided the Board with: 1) the final report/findings from the Pelham Housing Workshop – Charrette (May 2019), 2) George Reagan (New Hampshire Housing Authority) presentation pieces from the listening portion of the charrette (May 21, 2019), 3) 2019 workforce housing purchase and rent limits (RSA 674:58 – 61) and 4) New Hampshire Housing Accessory Dwelling Unit guide for municipalities. She explained the charrette process and final report/findings.

Mr. Castagna explained the design process. He said it originally started as a single-site review and morphed into an overlay of the town center reviewing available sites and existing buildings that potentially could be made into different types of housing. Ms. Wrightsman described building types and density.

Mr. Clark questioned if it made economic sense to attempt to build new affordable housing or if they should allow older homes to serve as workforce housing. Ms. Wrightsman commented that households were smaller than they had been in the past; older homes are bigger than what most are looking for. Empty nesters and younger people are competing in the same housing market looking for smaller homes. She said the older people (Baby Boomers) win because they have more liquid assets than the younger people (Millennials). Mr. Castagna added that the housing dynamic had changed, and the market is trying to catch up; there isn't any stock. He said Pelham was a bedroom community and offered rural aspects that people like. In looking at the model home shown in the report (572SF for \$310,000), Mr. Clark believed there would be a larger market for a 1000SF-1200SF house. Ms. Wrightsman pointed out that the 572SF had a second floor adding square footage. Mr. Clark asked if it was possible to build a 1000SF house for \$310,000 if there was (increased) density. Mr. Castagna answered yes; as long as density (number of units per acre) was there. He added that the Town should consider how to do community septic systems so larger projects could be done.

Mr. Gowan said he didn't want anyone to get the impression that the citizens didn't like the Town center; however, as planners it was understood that change was inevitable. He explained they were trying to figure out housing issues and had to think beyond the center. He said they had already permitted community septic systems and wells and knew how to approach density. He spoke about things that could be discussed more such as not just one change to one ordinance, but instead an evolution to several of them. He also wanted more discussion about possibly hiring an architect to come up with drawings (of structures) the Board felt comfortable with.

Mr. Lynde recalled the model for affordable housing was an unfinished cape-style home and wanted to know if that model was still viable. Mr. Castagna replied it was based on numbers. Mr. Lynde stated density was also an issue. He found it interesting to consider existing (older) houses and wanted to know if there was some way to entice a builder to do something with an older home. Mr. Castagna said it was worth considering; however, to make it work the Town would have to dictate the process, put out an RFP and partner with someone. Ms. Wrightsman suggested speaking to the owner at 9 Main Street (who is developing a mixed-use business/rental property) to find out how they put it together.

Mr. Culbert questioned what role landscaping would have in workforce housing. Ms. Wrightsman stated the Board would need to be specific in what they expected for landscaping. Mr. Castagna noted the Town had rules and regulations that would dictate requirements. Mr. Gowan stated they had many projects that were 'uninspired'. He believed architecture more than landscaping was the big thing. He suggested they come up with planting scenarios for people to follow so they don't 'reinvent the wheel' each time.

Mr. Clark heard reference to the term 'private – public partnership' and asked for an elaboration of towns with a similar size and demographic that had gone through that process. He noted Pelham acquired property but always designated it as conservation land. He asked if there were towns that had purchased property for the purposes of developing mixed-use. Mr. Castagna stated there were different ways to do it. A town could set up a housing authority and purchase land to create affordable housing. Mr. Clark understood 'affordable housing' in terms of the Federal program was without massive amounts of land, a sewer system etc. was not what Pelham was looking at. Mr. Castagna replied he was working on a (tax credits) project in Hampton Falls that didn't have sewer or water. He noted the 'sweet spot' for tax credits was thirty-five to forty-five units; anything under that wasn't affordable. He also dealt with a not-for-profit developer that would look at a piece of property the Town had and would work with the Town. Mr. Clark felt this type of situation was not what the Board was thinking of. He believed they were looking at what Zoning and Regulation changes could be made to incentivize workforce housing and create something to be placed on the ballot during the next Town Meeting. Mr. Castagna understood the Town wasn't going to change Zoning everywhere in the Town where there were houses. He

believed the Town should create a district for affordable housing and mentioned St. Patrick's School as being a great site, whether the existing building was utilized or razed and built again. He spoke about the sites that were reviewed (privately and Town owned) and said the Town should create an incentive for land/building owners to want to do something. He said there were opportunities out there if the Town could figure out how to allow the affordability and still stay within the culture and aesthetics of what they wanted for the center. Mr. Clark inquired if the projects began with the planning boards or select boards. Mr. Castagna replied he had countless discussions with planning boards to help them figure out what works and what doesn't. He stated they would have to bring in all the stake holders (citizens, all town boards etc.) for everyone to 'have their say'. In walking through the charrette, he saw that people (in Pelham) were pretty much on the same page with regard to the vision to make it work and make the Town better. He was involved with the fire station project and recalled the process of getting the roundabouts approved. He said Pelham was ahead of other towns because they had a goal and were figuring out steps of how to achieve it.

Ms. Wrightsman agreed with Mr. Castagna about Pelham being ahead of other New Hampshire communities. She stressed the importance of adding 'supply'; Pelham's vacancy was functionally zero. She found only five available properties. She said the absorption rate in New Hampshire was incredibly low. She emphasized the fact of having incremental development and adding supply in a gradual way; supply is needed to bring prices down.

Mr. Dadak saw information regarding accessory dwelling units ('ADU') and believed those units may be a steppingstone into affordable housing and allow homeowners an opportunity to stay in their home. Ms. Wrightsman provided the Board with the information on ADUs from the New Hampshire Housing Authority Guide to show their recommendation of allowing detached ADUs by right. She was told that Pelham currently allowed detached units by Special Exception. She said by allowing it by right, increasing the size and removing the owner/occupancy requirement was recommended. She said ADUs were a great way to create 'forever homes'. People are more likely to invest in building an ADU and move if they have the ability to rent out both their home and ADU. Mr. Castagna added that tiny homes were also coming if the building code was figured out. Ms. Wrightsman noted that Governor Sununu signed House Bill 312 which creates a committee to study tiny homes.

PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Peter Francese came forward and introduced himself. Mr. Francese was one of the original producers of the film 'Communities and Consequences'. He told the Board the producers had come together again (12 years later) to do another film. He was impressed with Pelham and said their courage, foresight and thoughtfulness with regard to housing issues was breathtaking. He said the State had 283 towns (10 counties), 161 school districts and a total population of 1.3 million. The cost of municipal services is enormous. Mr. Francese told the Board Pelham was unique and the first town in the State's history that has ever stopped age-restricted housing. He was rabidly against any type of housing that's discriminatory. He said there were tens of thousands of age-restricted housing units across the State that had driven the State to be the second oldest in the nation. He said labor shortages were immense; employers couldn't find workers. He commended the Town for having a charrette; the Town would benefit. Mr. Francese stated operating a school district was a fixed cost, not a per-child cost. He spoke about the myths surrounding operational costs of schools. He ended by reiterating Pelham was the most forward-thinking town in the State and commending them for it.

Mr. Montbleau thanked Mr. Francese for his comments and noted it was difficult to end age-restricted housing and said they wanted to now move forward with affordable/workforce housing.

Mr. David Hennessey came forward and stated he was involved with the charrette and the Vietnam Moving Wall. He noted the latest addition of his (real estate/housing) television show (on PTV and You Tube) had Ms. Wrightsman speaking on the same subject being discussed. In the show he included charts that showed the average sale price of a single-family home in Pelham was \$448,000. The second graph showed the Town as

having a historic low in the number of properties it had on the market. He said the two charts were linked by showing older people (Baby Boomers) weren't moving from their homes and at the same time Millennials were seeking properties to start their families. The two age groups were competing for the same types of smaller properties with expansion capability; however, every time generational wars occur the older population win because they are in a different financial bracket. Mr. Hennessey stated another theme that came out in the charrette was the question of density versus the housing being 'ugly'. He said there were several developments with more density in Town that the public didn't mind. Another thing that came out in the charrette was what a great town Pelham was; the only thing missing was vitality and flow of people through the center. Mr. Hennessey spoke about how active the Town was during children's sporting events (on the Village Green) or community events (Moving Wall, concerts on the green etc.). He said the idea of increasing density through mixed-use wasn't a new idea, it was what town villages were throughout history. He said Pelham was conservative and wanted to go back to their roots. He thanked Ms. Wrightsman and appreciated everything she had done. He felt Pelham was well on its way of becoming the best small town in the State.

Mr. Bill McDevitt spoke about landscaping and believed the Town should have strict requirements. He said when they had the 55+ housing economics and demand was the ruler. He explained when that type of housing was being built some of the seniors in Town were happy because they thought they would be able to sell their homes; however, the demand pushed the price up to \$340,000-\$360,000 and the Pelham seniors couldn't afford them. The 55+ homes were purchased by people from out of Town. He was concerned that the demand for affordable housing may push the price up. Mr. McDevitt stated the Town had purchased land for conservation, which had been a magnet for people to move to here. It has added to the 'livability' of the community. He reiterated his concern regarding the supply and demand issue. He felt if the demand was high for affordable housing it would push the price up absent government interference/intervention; however, the Town didn't have the staff to get involved. He felt the Planning Board was doing a great job in tackling the situation. He believed the most difficult thing was convincing the public that it was a good thing for them. He stated he was elected by the people who live in Town and had to answer to them, not by the people who might live in Town someday. He said it was difficult to act in people's best interest while keeping an eye to the future. He ended by stating landscaping was crucial and more than just trees.

Mr. Montbleau commented one of the things he learned in the charrette was landscaping was a key ingredient to keep a rural character and charm of the Town alive. Mr. Clark spoke about architectural design and said there was no reason why a structure couldn't be built to look like it was constructed in 1780, such as a five-bedroom farmhouse with a connected barn and outbuildings. He said that type of building could be architecturally turned into five or six units.

Ms. Heather Forde, Heritage Road, thanked the team who came to the meeting and the Board for hosting. She stated she moved to Pelham in 2012 for what Pelham had to offer and wasn't interested in changing anything. She said the haves/have nots were 'fighting' against each other economically and sociologically (not just the generation). She carried student loans and was locked into the house she had. She appreciated all the work being done.

Mr. Lynde felt the Board should keep in mind the Town had spent a lot of money on the school system. They would be doing upcoming work on the middle school. He was concerned about decreasing enrollment and believed they needed to entice young families. He said as members of a State that was struggling to supply the businesses with workforce, they had an obligation to help. He stated they had to find a way to do it and wasn't against putting rental units in as long as they were attractive and not an eyesore. Mr. Lynde discussed the importance of landscaping. He felt there was a solution to the situation and believed the Town needed to remain mindful of it.

Mr. Gowan thanked the team's willingness to work with the Town through the activities of the charette and attending the meeting. He called attention to the need for 'incremental' progress. He said they could do several things in different parts of Zoning; each one being a small improvement. He said changing some of the ADU

rules and making them less restrictive may increase their development. He reiterated they weren't trying to change things overnight and reiterated the importance of incremental development.

Mr. Clark was interested in having a resource for the demographic (age/housing) breakdown of what a vibrant/sustainable mix of population/income town was. He wanted to know what kind of numbers they were striving for. Ms. Wrightsman said she would see what she could to. Mr. Castagna stated the goal was to be multi-generational. He said it was subjective and didn't know if there were actual numbers. He understood the State was getting older, but it didn't have to be in a restrictive way.

Mr. Francese told the Board when he began writing his book, he started by reviewing the State twenty-nine years ago (1990); for all intents and purposes the population was identical to the United States and twenty-eighth for median age. In the last twenty-nine years New Hampshire had moved to second because of age-restricted housing and giving tax abatements to people over 65. He said in the past when people couldn't afford to purchase, they rented a smaller unit until they could afford to purchase. In doing so, there was no mobility in population. He said the way to fix things was to do exactly what Pelham was doing. Mr. Francese stated Pelham was the light to show how to do it. He said if the Town could have a general mix of population the community would be vibrant.

Ms. Wrightsman believed the Board could look at Dover, NH which was the only community in the State with a population increase of those between the ages of 21-40 and an increase in school enrollment. Mr. Clark questioned if census data was readily accessible. Mr. Francese replied he would forward data.

Mr. Montbleau informed when the Board began reviewing Zoning issues, they conducted a survey and found that workforce housing was the number one issue. With that, the charrette was very helpful to see what could be done going forward. He believed the issue was very complex and felt as the committee moved forward, they should keep in touch with Ms. Wrightsman and the team. He said the Board should have a soft startup by going forward thoughtfully and carefully.

Mr. Bergeron thanked the team. He said during previous meetings he told the Board there shouldn't be a restriction on owner/occupancy of ADUs and suggested they remove that language from the requirements. He was also in favor of having detached ADUs. At the time age-restricted housing was repealed (55+ and elderly) he wasn't convinced they should do it; however, the more he hears the more he thinks it was probably discriminatory. Mr. Bergeron suggested possibly amending the language from those regulations to be for workforce housing as long as it included caveats to protect the Town's charm. Items such as having them in high density areas with their own water (or municipal) supply and isolating them to have their own entrance/exit. He noted there were areas in Town that wouldn't support the density because of the soils. He said sometimes conservation subdivision applications were well intended but not truly in the spirit of the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Bergeron inquired if the mean age within the United States was 38. He believed the only way to get younger people in Town was to make it affordable.

Mr. Francese stated the median age of the United States was 38; however, the median age of New Hampshire was 43-44. The only state older is Maine who has a median age of 45. He pointed out that the median age in the United States only increased one year since 2010. The age in New Hampshire increased two full years. Mr. Francese told the Board he had been studying birth rates for 40-50 years and noted the lowest in the American history was during the Great Depression until 2018, which went below that number. He said the replacement level is about 2.1 births per woman and it was now at approximately 1.5. He stated the principal source of population growth in the State and country was immigration. He said they couldn't rely on births alone to repopulate the country.

Mr. Bergeron stated immigration, if it was proper and right, was the answer. His grandparents were immigrants. Mr. Francese commented that immigration in Canada wasn't a political issue and was thoughtfully done. They have a population policy that welcomes people if they have money and skills. Mr. Bergeron believed the Town

could do things immediately by making changes to the ADU requirements and possibly bring in workforce housing by backing off the cost of building them.

Mr. Montbleau said the team had given the Board a lot to think about as they start their committee meetings to discuss workforce housing. He said they would continue to contact the team with their questions. He felt the process was a great eye opener for the Board and thanked the team for meeting with them.

The Planning Board will only hold one meeting per month during July and August. Those meetings are July 1 and August 5, 2019. We will return to the two meetings per month schedule in September.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (Dadak/Lynde) To adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: (7-0-0) The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charity A. Landry
Recording Secretary