

**PUBLIC HEARING RE: Proposed Amendments to the Bethel Zoning Ordinance**

- 1. Outside Wood Boilers**
- 2. Highway Development District**
- 3. Multiple Family Dwellings**

The Public Hearing was called to order at 7:00 PM by Davis Dimock, Chair of the Bethel Planning Commission. Other than Planning Commission members, no one was in attendance. Commission members discussed Select Board comments received via The Herald regarding outside wood boilers and multiple family dwellings. The Hearing was adjourned at 7:15 PM.

**MINUTES: Meeting of 08/20/08**

Attending: Davis Dimock (Chair), Peter Dohrn, Carla Hodgdon, Joanne Kent, Cecil Washburn.

- 1. Call to Order:** 7:15 PM.
- 2. Review / Set Agenda:** Agenda item 'OTHER' was added with one topic.
- 3. Minutes Meeting of 06/18/08:** Approved as distributed in draft on 06/20/08.
- 4. Correspondence:** (a) Acknowledgement from DEC re application to subdivide lot on Albin Hill- file; (b) Three septic and water Permits [Campbell- River St, Barry- Main St, Abbott- Camp Brook Road]- file; (c) Three Project Review Sheets [Booth- Brink Hill, McKinstry- Camp Brook Corner, Rediker- Flea Market at Drive-In]- file; (d) Notice from Town of Randolph re Public Hearing for proposed amendments to the Randolph Zoning Ordinance on July 17<sup>th</sup>.

Commission members discussed the timeliness of becoming informed of notices from abutting towns. The timing of 'their' notice versus 'our' meeting schedule has been such that frequently the event has occurred before a meeting occurs. By consensus, it was decided that the existing 'system', although not perfect, was adequate.

- 5. Discussion and Resolution Public input re Proposed Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance From Public Hearing of same date:** No public input was forthcoming from the earlier duly warned Public Hearing. Two concerns had been noted from The Herald's summary of prior Select Board meetings- that zoning for outside wood boilers not be overly restrictive, and that increasing access for multiple family dwellings would increase road maintenance and school (e.g. bus route) costs.

While researching Outside Wood Boilers (OWB), it was determined that the majority of Vermont towns –and those in other states- had opted to ban OWB in village areas. This Commission opted to make OWB a conditional use in both village and non-village areas and to rely on careful consideration by the DRB in allowing OWB where justified and where not en-periling public health of village residents. Commission members feel that the proposed ordinance for Bethel is far less restrictive than in most communities that have addressed OWB installation.

Following publication of the Select Board concern that an increase in Multiple Family Dwellings in ‘out-lying’ areas would increase road maintenance and school costs, conversations with School Board members revealed the following: school buses already cover most every Town Highway, so there would be no increase to existing routes nor additional onus on roads; the addition of even three children to the school population would result in a school tax rate **decrease**.

By consensus: the proposed amendments –as available for Public Hearing this evening and as distributed according to 24VSA- will be transmitted to the Select Board.

6. **OTHER Letter requested from the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) re application from Abbott/LaRocque to permanently protect 150 acres straddling the Bethel-Royalton town line on Cleveland Brook Road:** Considerable and somewhat heated discussion ensued re preservation of agricultural land as well as re parameters within which agricultural land might be developed, implications of ‘in perpetuity’, and impact on tax revenues. At length, Commission members returned to the basic request from VLT. Hodgdon will cobble up a letter referencing ‘Consolidated Planning Principle’ #2 under ‘XI. AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY’ on page 45 of the Bethel Town Plan which states: ‘Resources for land owners to identify options and priorities for land conservation include private non-profit conservation organizations such as land trusts.’
  
7. **Work Plan Balance of 2008 and in to 2009:** The Commission should be represented at the anticipated Public Hearing re these proposed amendments: Dimock and Hodgdon expressed willingness to do so. The Bethel Town Plan will require up-dating by August 2011, needing to be addressed during 2010. Hodgdon recommended applying for a MPG in September 2009 to be used for another public survey: response and reaction to the previous survey was very favorable, valuable input was received, and application in 2009 would assure availability of public opinion before work on the Town Plan up-date started. Two possible topics remain from previous amendments to Chapter 24 (Act 117): ‘waivers’ and unifying ‘Planned Unit Development’ and ‘Planned Residential Development.’ Commission members need to be better informed about what these entail/encompass before proceeding. Consideration of –or at least ‘educating ourselves’ about- wind power was suggested.
  
8. **Next Meeting / Agenda Items:**
  - a. September: No meeting. Members will attend the Select Board Public Hearing. Dimock will assure that appropriate notification of this occurs.
  
  - b. **OCTOBER 15, 2008, 7:00 PM** at the Bethel Town Office.  
 Agenda items:
    - (1) Select Board disposition of proposed ZO amendments.
    - (2) Planned Unit Development / Planned Residential Development.
  
9. **Adjourn:** 8:31 PM.