

MEETING MINUTES

Pittsfield Planning Board

April 23, 2012

The Pittsfield Planning Board met on Monday, April 23, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Pittsfield Municipal Building to consider the following agenda.

PRESENT: Kelly Flanigan, Fred Raynes, Royce Sposato, Jack Wright, Alan Dunphy, Walter Reuter and Brent Newhouse. **ABSENT:** Chris Cookson **Also Present:** Town Manager Kathryn Ruth, Breanna Norris, Chris Huck, and Donald Hallenbeck.

1. Chairman **Alan Dunphy** opened the meeting by leading the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.
3. **PUBLIC HEARING: NONE**
4. **OLD BUSINESS/DISSION:**
 - a. Comprehensive Plan work session covering the follow sections of the plan: Housing Profile, Demographic Profile, and Historic Preservation.

The first section reviewed by the Planning Board was the Housing Profile. This section has parts that need to be updated. Alan Dunphy noted that the Housing Profile was updated in 2007 and the only items that may need updating are the subsidized rent and mobile home park sections. It was noted that most apartments in Pittsfield are subsidized. Urban Sprawl was discussed briefly. It was discussed that the wording in the comp plan remarking on discouraging growth should be replaced. Alan Dunphy noted this item would be further discussed in the Land Use section. Alan Dunphy noted there would be date changes made throughout the document.

Demographics: Alan Dunphy noted that he didn't see many changes in this section. It was noted that we have an above average income in Somerset County. It was noted this has a lot to do with the fact that we are one of the most southerly Towns in the county, where most of the rest of the Towns are farther up North. Income seems to be more closely associated with the quality of housing.

Economic Profile: This section will be discussed at the first meeting in May.

Land Use: Alan Dunphy noted on page 3 he had a couple questions.

Our Policy: C. It is the policy of the town to continue beautification efforts and require that junk be stored out of site.

Our Ordinance for junkyards was decimated by the State. The Board questioned, what could we do to try and control this issue? We have several places that are an issue in Town. The Town Manager noted that there are very few items in the current ordinances for the clean up activities. If it was a true junkyard, under the state requirements then procedures can take

place. These problem areas are just accumulations or junky yards. The Code Officer has gone out to speak with the individuals. He has sent nice letters and more strict letters. We do report to the Town Council once a month on this issue. A third of the people have verbally agreed to clean the areas and a few have agreed in writing. Fred Raynes questioned if the Town could move aggressively on the places in disrepair. These properties detract from the neighborhood. The Town Manager noted that is very hard to take action. There is nothing in the Ordinance to address this, as the building is not truly an unsafe building that the Town can go through procedures under the State law to go in and secure the building. The procedures under the State law allows the Town to declare a public menace or nuisance, go in and do the work, then assess a bill the individual is for properties that are wide open, have children going inside, it has to be an extreme situation. Many towns do not go through the court procedure as it has extensive costs, in the range of \$4,000 to \$10,000, according to the Town attorney. If people don't follow through on the court judgment, then you continue going back to court, to the point the judgments are all listed for the Town and the only way to get the money is to order the person to jail. These are cases that the towns are seeing, so many towns don't follow through the court procedures because of the cost. The Town Manager noted that some of the properties have basically an unkempt yard. To manage items like that you would need a property maintenance code. These codes can be very strict and are not liked by many people. Our approach has been to go to the people, to talk to them and offer to help if possible. Walter Reuter wondered if some of the Community Organizations can assist in these matters. Perhaps groups like the Boy Scouts or different Churches. There is a great Boy Scout Troop in Pittsfield. I bet they would love to help. The Town Manager noted this is an interesting thought. Alan Dunphy noted that he had a situation in another Town regarding a car that was in his fenced in backyard. The Town stated that it was harboring rats and it was removed from the property. The Town stated the vehicle was against their health ordinance.

Kelly Flanigan asked for further explanation of the following section:

Minimum strategies required to address state goals:

- (1) Maintain, enact or amend growth area land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot size, setbacks and road widths, or provide incentives such as density bonuses, to encourage the development of affordable/workforce housing.

Chris Huck explained what they are saying is if you reduce the costs of new construction then the chances are that you will be creating more affordable housing. Part of the cost of new construction is the land costs. If you permit a higher residential density or reduce setbacks or other elements, you are reducing the land costs and hopefully reducing parts of the housing. Chris Huck also explained density bonuses.

Historic Preservation:

Alan Dunphy noted he read through this section and did not see anything he did not agree with. It was noted that we do have a big push on right now to save the Historic Depot. Alan noted that the Comp Plan states there is no heat in the building, but that is incorrect.

Alan Dunphy noted, it has been his experience that owners of privately owned property are very reluctant to have anything to do with historic preservation. Generally, the advantages are far outweighed by the disadvantages and restrictions of what you can and cant do. During the last Comprehensive Plan, before it was finalized, there were several people who wanted to see the area around MCI designated a historic distinct. It was probably the worst meeting I have ever sat through anywhere.

Fred Raynes asked if there is a more efficient way to house Pittsfield's memorabilia then the Railroad Depot? Breanna Norris stated there is no other building available in Town that wants to store the items. It has been an issue that was brought up before. The Depot is now on the National Register. The building cannot be removed. It must be preserved. The Town would benefit if the Depot were restored in really nice condition. Even now, you wouldn't believe how many train history buffs visit the Depot. They don't come just for the Pittsfield history, but rather to see the building itself. It is one of the few left in the State, and really the country. They want to see the building that is still sitting on the railroad tracks.

Chris Huck stated there are no policies needed for the demographics. The Board should discuss population projections, this is guesswork and estimates based on past performance. The Town has been steady for about 40 years. If Pittsfield decides as a Town to grow faster or continue on as you were, this has a ripple effect on the plan later on.

Fred Raynes made some comments about population growth, but I have a very hard time making out what he is saying. It is something along the lines of getting young families and students here to Maine and growing the community, but much of what he says is hard to understand for me. I can keep trying. Are the word for word comments important from each member here? There is a lot of discussion going on at one time.

5. NEW BUSINESS/DISCUSSION ITEMS: NONE

6. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Fred Raynes and seconded by Walter Reuter that the meeting be adjourned at 8:18 pm.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

Respectfully submitted by
Nicole Nickolan, Town Clerk