

Town of Randolph

Planning Board Minutes

September 7, 2023

Members Present: June Hammond Rowan, Robert Ross, Tim Mather, Kevin Rousseau, and John Turner, and William Demers

Members Excused: None

Public Present: Howard Wemyss, Tara Bamford (via phone), and Shelli Fortin, Minutes Taker

1. Call to Order

June Hammond Rowan called the meeting to order at 6:57 pm.

2. Roll Call

3. Review of Minutes

On a motion by John Turner, seconded by Robert Ross, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the August 2, 2023, meeting as presented.

4. Communications to the Board

The NH Charitable Foundation sent information on Listening Sessions that they are holding. The nearest one is in Plymouth.

A letter was received from Paul Cormier to the Board:

Aug. 30, 2023

Planning Board

Town of Randolph, N.H.

Thank You for considering the removal of the Special exception requirement for ground mounted solar arrays from the Land Use Ordinance.

Although I am not speaking for the ZBA officially, it is my opinion that this requirement should be removed. RSA 674:17 j, under purposes of Zoning Ordinances, begins by stating "To encourage the installation and use of solar, wind, or other renewable energy systems". This Special Exception requirement simply puts up a barrier for a resident to install such a system on their property. Roof mounted systems do not have this requirement. In our Land Use Ordinance,

we already have addressed setbacks, and height. Even a system on a tracking unit does not come close to the maximum height of 35ft.

Solar arrays are totally passive in nature. They are simply structures. They make no noise, or odor. I don't see where there is a need for a special exception to protect the interest of the community.

For a resident not familiar with dealing with applications such as this, it can be intimidating. Scheduling and waiting for hearings etc. can cost the applicant delays, and difficulty scheduling contractors as well.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Paul H. Cormier

June Hammond Rowan advised that the schedule was received from the state with the dates for any potential amendments to the Land Use Ordinance.

5. Report of Officers and Committees

a. Selectboard

John Turner advised that the Durand Road project looks good, and they just need to finish the turnarounds on both ends. Kevin Rousseau advised that the turnaround at one end is done, and at the other end they hit ledge.

b. Randolph Forest Commission

Tim Mather advised that they have started talking about the Stewardship Plan and that a public hearing will be needed for this eventually.

Mr. Mather also advised that they discussed the management of the glades. There is a MOU in place with GBA, however there is some interest from residents to manage the area locally. There have been concerns about the promotion of the area, and that it is bringing in more people than expected. The Forest Commission suggested that the Planning Board hold a public hearing in the spring to gather feedback. There is a requirement for a 6-month notice if the town wanted to pull out of the agreement. William Demers asked if GBA has been spending money on improvements to that area. Mr. Mather advised that they had 80 volunteers last year help with cleaning up brush in that area. There is no doubt that they are an enthusiastic and effective group, however it may not fit with the Randolph Master Plan. June Hammond Rowan asked how long GBA has been managing that area, and Mr. Mather advised it has been at least five years. It was suggested that this may be something the Forest Commission may want to add to the Stewardship Plan.

6. Applications

No new applications were received.

7. Unfinished Business

8. Other Business

a. Site Plan Review Application and Checklist

June Hammond Rowan advised that Tara Bamford can create a fillable form when this is approved.

William Demers asked about the required soil information and was advised that the checklist is taken directly from the Site Plan Regulations. Robert Ross noted that you can get maps of the soils in town, and June Hammond Rowan added that you can get most of them digitally now. Ms. Hammond Rowan also noted that the property owner has to sign the form, which also gives permission for the Board to look at the site.

William Demers asked if this would apply to subdivisions of lots and was advised this would only be for commercial properties or for three or more dwelling units. There is a separate subdivision application.

On a motion by Robert Ross, seconded by John Turner, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Site Plan Application and Checklist as presented.

b. Master Plan Revisions

June Hammond Rowan provided the Board with a list of suggested edits to the version of the Master Plan presented in 2019. The Planning Board held a hearing on the revisions to the Master Plan in 2019, but the revised version was never adopted. They will hold another public hearing, likely in November.

Tara Bamford asked if she should take time to update the census data, and June Hammond Rowan asked that the new information be included, but not to remove the old data.

Ms. Hammond Rowan also suggested that wording be included for energy conservation in addition to land conservation, such as new opportunities for utilities including broadband and solar.

Ms. Hammond Rowan also noted that the summary of the Community Conservation that was held in 2018 will need to be added as an appendix.

Ms. Hammond Rowan suggested that they add wording about uses being compatible with the area. Currently an applicant could get a special exception for a hotel or motel, and this

may not be compatible with a residential neighborhood. It was noted that the town may need to consider more than one zone.

Howard Wemyss asked if there has been any serious discussion about short-term rentals. Tara Bamford advised that there was discussion last year when they did amendments. They added a section that states if one owner owns two or more properties, it would be considered a tourist accommodation and require a special exception. Mr. Wemyss noted that although the rental of summer cottages is a long-standing tradition, he does not want to see Randolph head down the same path as other communities, such as Conway.

It was agreed that Hammond Rowan will work with Tara Bamford on a new version of the proposed revisions to the Master Plan to discuss at the October meeting.

c. Land Use Ordinance – Potential Amendments

Concerns were raised about the requirement for a special exception for free-standing solar arrays. The Land Use Ordinance allows roof mounted arrays. Howard Wemyss noted that it is time-consuming to fill out paperwork for the special exception, and that this is something the town should be encouraging to get away from fossil fuels. A few members expressed concerns about the ground mounted arrays, noting that they can be eyesores if visible. Traditionally NH allows abutters to have a voice, and some neighbors may not want to look at them. Keeping the special exception requirement would allow for review. Tara Bamford suggested that it could be listed as a permitted use, but with standards. Ms. Bamford advised that she would send a sample from another community as a model for Randolph to consider.

June Hammond Rowan also stated that the current definition of dwelling states that it is a structure on a permanent foundation. Ms. Hammond Rowan noted that many current structures in Randolph are not on permanent foundations. Ms. Hammond Rowan asked if this would this mean that the structure would not count as a dwelling. Tara Bamford advised that two dwellings are allowed per lot, one primary and one accessory, and that no more than one use is allowed per lot. Ms. Hammond Rowan advised that with changing family dynamics, many owners are wondering if they can add a second dwelling on their lots and they need to look ahead to what might be happening in the future. Ms. Bamford advised that the current wording for accessory dwelling unit does not set a size limit, and this may be something to consider.

d. Other Business

William Demers noted the carbon offset companies that are buying up land in the Pittsburg area and asked if there were any large tracts of land in Randolph that may be considered for this. Robert Ross advised that one-third of the town is national forest, and one-third is town forest, so there is probably not a large enough area available. Most are taking a wait and see approach to this issue; however, the NH Congressional Delegation is addressing this, and the potential impacts on the area.

9. Public Comments

There were no additional public comments.

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Kevin Rousseau, seconded by John Turner, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelli Fortin
September 8, 2023