

ACTON PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING FOR PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES
September 24, 2009

(Filmed by the Acton Cable Committee)

Members present were: Chip Venell, Thomas Cashin, Yoli Gallagher, Keith Davis, Jessica Donnell

Guests Present: Ron Marko, Bea Marko, Howard Stevens, Ann Stevens, John Moore, Bill Cataneyese, Roger Roy, Karl Hodgdon, Virginia DeBoer, Timothy Aiken, Pete Smith, Lorraine Yeaton, Bob Cronin, Michelle Rumney (recording secretary), Ken Paul (Code Enforcement Officer)

The Public Hearing was opened by Chairman Chip Venell. Mr. Venell explained the process in which ordinances can get changed and put before the voters. He explained that these changes are not changes that were prompted by the Planning Board, but by the Selectman. By ordinance, the Planning Board is required to hold a public hearing on any proposed zoning changes regardless of who proposes them. Chip begins the discussion on question #1, the proposal to bring minimum lots size back to 2 acre lots.

John Moore comments that reducing the lot size back to 2 acres does not affect that many people in the town, this is only of great advantage to developers who want to squeeze more lots into a subdivision. He believes that this step would be a poor choice for the town and would increase the demand of services in the town and would bring more children into the school system.

Tom Cashin refers to 3 maps that are posted on the wall, which shows current buildout of the town, and the other 2 maps show what the town could look like at maximum build out with 2 acres lots vs 3 acre lots. The 2 acre could produce 6691 residential lots the 3 acre would produce 4981 lots. This is a significant difference and should the maximum build out be reached he questions as to how the town will pay for the increase on demand for services that it will have to provide.

Karl Hodgdon asks Ken Paul when this build out will occur at the current rate that permits are being given out and if the big boom in building was factored into the equation.

Ken replies that Acton Wakefield Watershed Alliance has recently done a study and believes that date was estimated at 2056. He does not know what was factored in to this estimation, though he would believe that they used the slow time, the big boom and the current economic situation as factors.

Tom Cashin refers to the Comprehensive Plan Section One page 2 where there is a bar graph showing the population change in Acton from 1990-2000, showing a 24% increase. He reiterates that such continued growth will and has increased in demand of services.

Karl Hodgdon comments that what the Town should be doing is looking for a decent business industry to come to Acton to help support the taxpayers paying for all these increases.

John More reiterates that the only people that this lot size reduction helps is the developers.

Tom Cashin comments the impact on the lake resources also need to be taken into consideration. With no further comment, Chip moves onto the next question on the order which is to amend the comp plan to coincide with the proposed change on the lot size in the rural district. No further public comment is given.

Ken Paul uses a power point presentation to walk through all the proposed changes for question #3. He explains that the majority of the changes are to allow for smaller setbacks for non conforming lots of record, which up until last year's changes had always been 10 feet on the

sides and 50 feet from the centerline of the road. He explains that many lots especially around the lakes are only 50feet wide and with the setback of 25feet on the sides, it makes most of them un-buildable. This has potential to flood the Zoning Board of Appeals with variance cases. Ken walks through each change which is hi-lighted, underlined or stricken out and explains each one. Chip opens the floor for public comment.

John Moore asks if this is a public hearing for the public to give input, then why has this already been sent to print and signed onto the warrant. Now there is no option for changes

Chip explained that he would have to ask that question of the Selectman as these are their articles. Inevitably you have to option on voting day to check yes or no.

Tom asks Chip if the Planning Board will be voting on their recommendation at the next meeting, to which Chip replied that he believed so.

Joe Ruma asks Ken if the changes proposed in question 1 and 2 would have an effect on the current growth cap for Acton. He goes on to explain that when they were working on things with the State a lot of things were taken into consideration to get that cap of 35.

Ken explains that the cap will not change until the Town pursues it through a change in Ordinance.

Michelle Rumney explains to Joe, that the growth cap was put into place many years before and at that time the lot sizes were 2acres minimums not 3, it wasn't until last year when the lot size requirement went to 3 acres.

Joe Ruma explains that the biggest concern should be those lots just outside of Shoreland. If they become heavily developed it will affect the water quality. The change was put in for the 3 acre lots to allow more land for run off to percolate before it reached the water.

Bob Cronin comments that there can't be too many more large lots in the Shoreland area.

Ken Paul responds that there are a few smaller developable lots as well as some larger ones.

No more comments are offered. Chip reminds every one that the Selectman's hearing on the warrant will be on October 8th.

Public Hearing Closed.