



Town of Groton Massachusetts Zoning Board of Appeals

Meeting Agenda and Minutes

October 21, 2020 via ZOOM – Bylaw Discussion

Present

Bruce Easom, Chairman

Jay Prager, Member

Dan McLaughlin, Associate Member

Jen Spencer, Associate Member

Jack Petropolous, Associate Member

Not Present

Mark Mulligan, Member

Cynthia Maxwell, Member

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 pm by Chairman Easom.

Meeting Minutes

Other business

Discussion of Bylaw changes correction of 218- 9.3A (formerly 218-27A)

Atty. Collins submitted another letter, 10/14, outlining suggested additional verbiage with notes from the last meetings. He thinks it is now time to move forward, as the wording is simplified and easy to understand. He said that unless there are other changes, we should meet with the PB during their November meeting to discuss the proposed revisions.

Member Prager said it looks fine. He said he is glad there is no 500 sq. ft. limitation, noting that the revisions are along the lines of what was discussed last time.

Atty. Collins said he agrees that it is an arbitrary number. He said he wanted to know if Chairman Easom wanted him to go through the changes.

Chairman Easom said yes for the benefit of the public.

Atty. Collins outlined the proposed changes, noting that he is simplifying the language. Prohibited if enlarged within 24 months seemed like a good idea 40 years ago but not today. Somewhat arbitrary. Also 500 sq ft minimum is replaced with habitability per the current State code. Removed section 4 as 25% requirement is unfair. Safety stairs, would be designed so as to not detract from aesthetics of building if stairs face the street.

Member Petropolous said he liked all the changes, noting that he feels that the aesthetics of the fire stairs are up to ZBA and asked how that standard is applied.

Member Prager said the public can also weigh in and because the ZBA provides the permit, the board has a good deal of discretion.

Chairman Easom said he wants to hear from the public as part of the hearing process because they understand the character of the neighborhood best.

Atty. Collins said that is part of the process with any special permit. He said he thinks it is good to highlight the need for fire suppression and fire exits/safety stairs, noting that that gives an applicant an idea of what he needs to think about when asking for a permit.

Member Petropolous said he feels it is subjective for each board member, noting that he wants to be sure that the ZBA is expected to make decisions on aesthetics like this.

Member Prager said it is an informed decision, based on abutters, drawings, site walk, etc., noting that it is not a hard decision to make.

Member Spencer said it all sounds good, noting that although it is subjective, the board cares and makes good decisions.

Member McLaughlin said someone needs to make a decision, so it is good it happens in a public forum.

Judy Anderson, interested party, had no comments.

Chairman Easom asked Atty. Collins whether the draft is ready for a joint meeting with the PB.

Atty. Collins said he thinks it is, noting that he will find out tomorrow night about when the next PB meeting is scheduled. He said he is willing to make a presentation but wants a quorum to agree to have him represent the ZBA

Chairman said he wants a fully joint meeting.

Atty. Collins said he agrees, noting that there are two functions in having a joint meeting: 1) to vet the language and 2) who should be the special permit granting authority, the ZBA or PB.

Chairman Easom asked the board whether it is okay for the admin to set up a joint meeting with the PB.

Member Prager said he thinks it is just an administrative issue and there is no need to vote officially.

Discussion ensued regarding what will be presented to the PB.

Atty. Collins suggested voting to designate one member to answer questions if he has any.

Chairman Easom asked for volunteers.

Member Prager said he would.

A motion was made to designate Member Prager as the member to work with Atty. Collins on the final revisions. Member McLaughlin seconded. The motion passed with four yeas (one abstention) via roll call vote.

Minutes and Bills

Member Petropolous asked about an issue raised re: potential conflict of interest with the Degan/Brooks Orchard appeal as he was interested in purchasing the property and put in an offer. The general consensus was that he should pose the question to the attorney general's ethics committee.

No Groton Herald bills were signed.

No minutes were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm by unanimous roll call vote.

Approved 1/13/21.