

**Walpole Planning Board Minutes**  
**Tuesday, September 14, 2021**  
**Town Hall**  
**7 pm**

**Roll Call:** Present: Board members Chair Jeff Miller, Vice-Chair Dennis Marcom, Clerk Jason Perron, Jeff Harrington, Joanna Andros, Select Board Representative Steve Dalessio, Bill Carmody, Alternate Trevor MacLachlan.

**Recording:** Secretary Marilou Blaine. **This meeting is being recorded. These minutes are unapproved and will be reviewed at the October 2021 meeting for corrections, additions and/or omissions.**

**Call to order:** Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

**Minutes:** Mr. Marcom asked that on page 5, second paragraph of the August minutes that July 15, 2021 be added to the first sentence and in the same paragraph the word “date” be changed to “data.” Ms. Andros suggested striking out the “said” at the end of the second paragraph on page 8 as the word was repeated. On page 3, second paragraph, she changed “use” to “used.” Mr. Perron made a motion to accept the amended minutes. Mr. Marcom seconded the motion and motion carried.

**Old Business:**

**Public Hearing No. 1: Two amendments to the Walpole Zoning Ordinance: Amendment No. 1 add inflatable and wind-activated sign such as fabric feather flags: Amendment No. 2 gives a definition of a temporary signs and examples of this type of sign. If approved, these two amendments will be put on the March 2022 warrant for approval by the townspeople.**

ZBA Chairperson Jan Leclerc said she was presenting two amendments to the sign ordinance. The first one deals with wind-activated feather flag signs and inflatable signs. There were questions if these signs were already prohibited in the ordinance, but the Select Board suggested it would be better to specifically mention this type of sign in an ordinance. Amendment 2 adds the definition of temporary signs and currently they are not mentioned in the ordinance, they are not defined. That’s not how an ordinance works. You need a definition. So now our feeling is that since they are defined in an ordinance, and we give a few examples of temporary signs, that would take care of any problem.

Mr. Dalessio said ‘wind-activated. What about an open sign on a restaurant. Is that wind-activated? The American flag on a building. Is that wind-activated? If it is, it is prohibited in the town of Walpole.’

Ms. Leclerc said we don’t consider the flag a sign. So why is a feather flag considered a sign? Mr. Dalessio asked. Ms. Leclerc answered because it usually says something that advertises a product at a commercial site. So if I put up a feather flag at a site that said open, that would be acceptable because I’m not advertising a product?

Mr. Marcom asked Mr. Dalessio if he had a suggestion that would clear this up. How could we reword that? Ms. Leclerc asked.

Mr. Dalessio said he didn’t have a word offhand but I’m looking at it from the enforcement side. He would say that wind-activated signs in the temporary sign ordinance are acceptable because they are usually put out when a site is open and usually taken down at night. That would be okay. But that’s not

what usually happens. Mr. Dalessio said but we're writing an ordinance. So if you want to use a feather flag, it's got to be a temporary sign. I think that's the answer. It seems if the building is open, it's a definition issue. You can't enforce it, that's a gray zone.

Ms. Leclerc said you can't regulate what someone puts on a sign. And there's an ordinance that says all signs in a commercial zone must come to the zoning board to see if they conform with the ordinance and we've never seen anyone. Also there are setback requirements for signs.

What about real estate people? Mr. Dalessio asked. Do they come to the board? Those are temporary and allowed.

Ms. Andros asked about when a painter is painting a house he puts out a sign. Sometimes it's just there for a long time. Mr. Dalessio said if the job is done, after 10 ten days the sign should be gone.

Jason agreed with the wording about the flag being wind-activated being the problem. Ms. Leclerc asked about using the term inflatable sign.

Ms. Andros said use that as opposed to an open sign when it's taken down. What about the placement? she asked. There's usually a thing by the door that you put the flag in that means your open for business. But if its right out by the street, it's fluttering and distracting.

If you take out wind-activated and look at feather flags differently as put out and taken in every day you could call it temporary. Mr. Dalessio said it would have to be removed after 10 days.

Mr. Miller said we do have time so we can continue this next month and the chair of the ZBA can double check with her board. You will not be having a new hearing and nor creating anything new. We can deal with this next month after you the connect with your board. Mr. Dalessio said he'd email Ms. Leclerc if he had any suggestions. Ms. Leclerc asked the Planning Board to do the same.

Mr. Perron made motion continue this hearing. The motion was second and the motion carried.

**Public Hearing No. 2: Approve updated sections of the Master Plan:** Implementation Plan, Population and Housing Analysis, Transportation Chapter.

Mr. Miller said to his board that you are all familiar with the update to these sections. He asked if there were any questions or concerns. Hearing none, he asked "Do I have a motion to accept." Mr. Perron made a motion to accept the updated sections to the Master Plan as presented. Mr. Marcom seconded the motion and the motion carried.

**New Business:**

**Avanru Development Group LTD/Red Barn Lane. Tax Map 12, Lot 13-3.** Agent: James Phippard, Brickstone Land Use Consultants LLC. Proposed: Vacant Lot/Self Storage Units, 37,450 square feet. Red Barn Condominium. Request for a public hearing at October PB meeting.

Mr. Jim Phippard said he was here to submit an application for its completeness. He was here on behalf of Red Barn Lane LLC. The Application applied to a property on Red Barn Lane located off Route 12, next to the Tractor Supply store. He proceeded to go through the checklist included with the application. Applicants check yes, no or NA, meaning non applicable, on each of 27 items.

Red Barn Condominium is on 7.3 acres of land. It is adjacent to Dollar Store and the Abenaki Springs residential development. The applicant is proposing to construct 5 buildings totaling 37,450 square

feet. The buildings will be a mix of self-storage units, climate controlled, and some cold storage units. Some units will be approached from the outside, other renters would have to go inside the building. There will also be a 400 square-foot office area in Building No. 1.

There will be a total of 25 parking spaces provided. Renters who have outside access will simply park in front of their unit. Inside access units will have parking spaces by the doors to the interior to the buildings.

According to the requirements on the checklist, the name of the project is on the cover sheet, names and address of owners, tax map and lot numbers and zoning districts of abutters are provided. There are no easements, owners did pay fees and are not requesting any waivers for the project. Physical features of abutting lands were also provided. DiBernardo Associates prepared an outline of the site plan.

The site will be accessed 24-hours a day via a new paved driveway off Red Barn Lane after phase 2 is completed and an office is in Building No. 1. Before that is open 6 am to 10 pm. The driveway will be 20 feet wide with access being controlled by a sliding gate activated by a keypad. The driveway is located approximately 650 feet from Route 12. Red Barn Lane currently provides access to Tractor Supply, Dollar General and Abenaki Springs Apartments.

Site lighting will consist of LED wall paks using full cutoff fixtures. The wall paks will be mounted 8 feet high and provide an average of 1.09 foot candles over the paved areas. A board member asked if lights would be off at night and motion-sensor lighting used. Mr. Phippard said "no" because any movement such as a car passing or a small animal could set off the lighting if it were turned off. Lights will turn on at dusk and turn off at dawn.

Utilities will be underground. The site is served by Town Water and Town Sewer. There are two existing fire hydrants on Red Barn Lane, one near the new driveway to the site. Because the project is using town water and sewer, no test pits were needed. The systems will simply tie into the current system. The project is not located in a floodplain.

The existing site is a flat site sloping from north to south at a 2 to 3 percent slope. The onsite soil is Agawam, Type 24 A, fine sandy loam, which is excellent for stormwater infiltration. Runoff created by the new buildings will be collected on site using catch basins, roof gutters and curbing. Most of the runoff will then be infiltrated using infiltration strips next to the buildings or infiltration strips along the perforated storm drains under paved areas. Excess stormwater not infiltrated will discharge to a small stormwater pond to be constructed at the southwest corner of the site. The stormwater system has been designed to retain and infiltrate a 50-year storm. No increase in runoff will leave the site. Sediment and erosion control will be accomplished with silt fencing at the perimeter to prevent sediment from leaving the site.

A wetland area exists along the east and south sides of the site. Silt fencing will be installed during construction to prevent any sedimentation from entering the wetland.

A free-standing main sign is 24.6 square feet and 8 feet high will be installed 60 feet from the edge of Red Barn Lane, 10 feet from the west property line, near building 5. Informational wall signs are proposed to identify the office area, the building entries and hours of operation. The hours of operation will 6 am to 10 pm every day for the climate controlled units in building 3,4, and 5. The cold storage units in all buildings will be accessible 24 hours via a gate with keypad access. The office, constructed in phase 2, will be by appointment only.

The proposed buildings are single-story metal buildings with pitched metal roofs. The siding will be Desert Sand colored. Overhead doors, passage doors and building trim will be Fern Green in color.

Mr. Dalessio asked if there would be fencing around the units. Mr. Phippard said a 6-foot-chain-link fencing would be installed around the perimeter of both phases. Mr. Dalessio also asked if Fire Chief Mark Houghton had signed off on the project. Mr. Phippard said he would get in touch with him.

Mr. Phippard continued that the buildings will be built in two phases with buildings 3,4 and 5 being built first. There will be a 12-to-14- month gap before building phase two was under construction. Total time of construction is 14 to 15 months. Mr. MacLachlan asked how people who wanted to rent units would be able to do that if the office was in the last phase of building. The answer was that all appointments would be made online and be by appointment only. The office is in Keene.

Mr. Marcom made a motion to hold a public hearing on the construction of the storage units next month. Mr. Perron seconded the motion and the motion carried.

**Possible apartments in Potato Barn:** Barry Bellows presenting. Preliminary meeting for a site plan review. The owner of the Potato Barn and the inn, Steve Rudek of Sacramento, CA, was also present at the meeting.

Mr. Bellows said this was a preliminary meeting only. He wanted to know if apartments were allowed at the Potato Barn. Originally it was approved as a site for functions such as weddings, with a couple of other areas for commercial use. This would be a change of use. Depending on whether or not they found uses for the two or three commercial areas, Bellows said there may be 10 units. The large function room at the top of the building would remain.

Bellows said 10 units would go into the unfinished section of the barns. The question is what is needed to get approval for that project. There will be no footprint alterations other than windows and interior renovations. For the time being the granary and piggery would be available to be rented as commercial space. If that didn't work, the space could be used for five to six more units.

Mr. Rudek said one of the questions contractors always ask is "What actually are you building" and my answer is "I don't know. So when we built that section, we over built. I knew what I was trying to do, I was trying to bring to life to the north face of Walpole because that included the potato barn. And it was getting worse every day. The inn was vacant. It is not the way I ordinarily do my business. I do have a background in real estate. I do have a background in residential real estate and owning apartment buildings. But I exited out by 2008 crash. I do know quite a bit about renting out apartments, but in this particular case, what I would really like to do, and it is very important to me, is to keep the ambience of the overall space. The original intention was to bring something beautiful there and the connection between that (the barn) and the inn." His plans are apartments for senior living, strictly senior living, 55 and above, and higher end. There seems to be a real need for it here in Walpole, Mr. Rudek said, and at the same time keeping it very harmonious with the inn. A walk path between the barn and the inn is available and even if you went up the road in a car it's a one-minute drive. "So this is something I've been trying to figure out for a long time and that's why the bottom part of the barn has been sitting vacant and unfinished for maybe five years. The exact balance, I'm hoping, the ideal with the parts that are already finished.

"The commercial space remain as they are, at least for now, until I find what kind of reception I get from the community for having high-end community living there. Barry Bellows will oversee the construction that it's going to be beautiful. I wouldn't have it any other way."

How big are these units? A board member asked. Mr. Rudek said, "One two-bedroom and the rest are one bedroom. It's possible that to make better use of the space that the one bedrooms will become studios. So he expects that there will be one or two people in a unit. I don't intend for there to be children."

If he decides to use the commercial space for apartments, it might be 14 spaces. In the beginning he is planning on 9 spaces, which is the unfinished portion of the barn.

Ms. Andros asked about parking. Parking is adequate parking, but if there is a wedding on the top floor, it may be a little tight. But there is plenty of acreage and there would be dedicated spaces for residents. Mr. Miller said parking won't be a problem.

When Mr. Rudek has talked to realtors, they have recommended auto repair shops or something like that. "And I've repeatedly said no, I don't think so."

Ms. Andros asked about the driveway. Currently it's sure pack until you get up to barn and that's asphalt.

Mr. Dalessio said his only concern is the mix of a venue with residential and a party going. Would it create more of a burden on the Walpole police department. Senior bedtimes are earlier.

Tenants would certainly know that before moving in. And they can move out of course, there's always sound proofing. It's not unusual to have mixed used space. It's all over in Europe. In fact, it's pretty classy. You already have mixed use, for example Burdicks. You have apartments, you have offices, you have a restaurant below. Mr. Dalessio said it not quite the same.

The project is allowed under Change of Use. Mr. Bellows will be back when he is ready to submit a plan and say exactly what is proposed.

**Workshop:** On Tuesday, September 28, at 7 pm SWRPC Planner Lisa Murphy will be here to do a workshop on another part of the Master Plan: Land Use Analysis and Plan.

Also, looking at last month's vote, it would to have a second alternate, Mr. Miller said. He asked the board to try to think of people who may be interested.

Mr. Perron made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilou Blaine, WPB Secretary

Copies: WPB, ZBA, Town Offices.

Posted: Town Offices, bulletin board outside Post Offices, The Walpolean, [www.walpolenh.us](http://www.walpolenh.us)

**Next meeting: October 12, 2021.**