

HOPKINTON PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES
JANUARY 11, 2011

Chairman Bruce Ellsworth opened the Hopkinton Planning Board public hearing of Tuesday, January 11, 2011, at 6:00 PM in Hopkinton Town Hall. Members present: Christopher Lawless, Timothy Britain, Michael Wilkey, Celeste Hemingson, Ed Taylor, Cettie Connolly and Jane Bradstreet. Members absent: Bethann McCarthy

The purpose of the public hearing is to review the following zoning amendments proposed for 2011 Town Meeting:

I. Public Hearing – Zoning Amendments.

- Section VII, Signs. The amendment would repeal the current Sign Ordinance and replace it with a new ordinance entitled the same. The new ordinance addresses signs prohibited, signs allowed and exempt from permit requirements, signs requiring permits, design, construction and maintenance of signs, master signage plans, sign area and height computations, signs permitted in residential and non-residential districts, signs for multiple principal uses or buildings on a lot, free-standing directory signs, temporary off-premises signs, agriculture and farming signs, sign illumination, architectural design review, and change of tenant signs.
- Section II, Definitions. The amendment would include definitions for various types of signage referenced in amended Section VII of the Zoning Ordinance.

A full text of the proposed amendments is available at Town Hall, Town Clerk's Office and online at www.hopkinton-nh.gov.

Mr. Britain reviewed with the Planning Board format changes, so that the numbering of the subsections coincides with the numbering in the Zoning Ordinance (copy of revised draft attached). In addition to format changes, Mr. Britain had moved information concerning window signs and construction signs to the exempt section and added language dealing with real estate lead signs. A major revision made was to subsection 7.9 changing the determining factor of sign sizes so that it is based on building frontage, rather than lot frontage. It was believed that this change makes the determining factor for sign sizes less arbitrary. Additionally, a table was created outlining the maximum number of free-standing and building signs permitted. It was noted that the maximum sizes of signs is intended to be very liberal in an effort to address today's business needs. For example, the proposed maximum sign size in the B-1 district is 60 square feet; whereas, the current Sign Ordinance allows a maximum size of 15 square feet. Mr. Britain then advised that when determining the sizes and number of additional free standing signs allowed lot sizes were taken into consideration. For example, lots that have three (3) acres and frontage of 500 feet or more will be allowed to have two (2) free-standing signs.

Sarah Dustin addressed the Board suggesting that there is a great amount of flexibility being proposed for businesses, rather than for residences. For example, she stated that in an effort to advertise yard sales people tend to place signs on utility poles; however, the proposed ordinance no longer allows signs on utility poles. In response, Mr. Britain explained that prohibiting signs on utility poles is not a change from the existing Ordinance. In fact, the state law prohibits the placement of signs on utility poles.

Ms. Dustin suggested that the proposed ordinance is too restrictive for signs advertising property for sale. She suggested that larger on and off premises signs should be permitted so that there is sufficient room to advertise special features of a property. Mr. Britain responded by stating that the sizes proposed are quit generous. In fact, the sizes proposed are larger than what is allowed in the City of Concord.

Ms. Dustin then questioned whether a permit and fee is required for real estate signs. Mrs. Robertson replied no, advising that the matter of fees is a determination made by the Board of Selectmen, rather than the Planning Board.

Jane Sullivan-Durand asked for clarification concerning directory signs and the number of special event signs allowed. In response, Mr. Britain directed Mrs. Sullivan-Durand's attention to the applicable section allowing directory signs, noting that the proposed ordinance would allow directory signs in addition to a building sign. Furthermore, he advised that a maximum of two (2) signs advertising special events is allowed on a property

Ginny Haines on behalf of the Contoocook Depot and Farmer's Market addressed the Board suggesting that the time period allotted for signs advertising special events may not be sufficient for events held during the holidays. Following discussion, the Board agreed to extend the time to a period not to exceed twenty-one (21) consecutive days.

Mrs. Sullivan-Durand suggested that the size of an A-frame sign is almost eight (8) square feet; however, the proposed ordinance allows a maximum size of six (6) square feet. The Board agreed to amend the sign size to no more than eight (8) square feet. The change included Off Premises Business Signs, Special Event Signs and Temporary (Agricultural) Off-Premises Signs.

Mrs. Connolly expressed concern with the term Master Signage Plan, suggesting that the term should be changed so that it is easier understood by applicants. The Board agreed to change the term to "Non Residential Lot Signage Plan".

The Board briefly discussed window signage with Chairman Ellsworth and Mr. Lawless suggesting that the size limitation be eliminated or changed to allow 100 % coverage. Following discussion, a majority of the Board (Britain, Hemingson, Taylor and Wilkey) agreed to limit window signage to an area of not more than 35%.

Mrs. Bradstreet joined the Board.

II. Adjournment.

Chairman Ellsworth declared the hearing adjourned at 7:40 PM. A final public hearing concerning zoning amendments is scheduled for Tuesday, January 25, 2011, at 7:00 PM in the Town Hall.

Karen L. Robertson
Planning Director