

**TOWN OF UNITY
LAND USE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 23, 2013
LOCATION: UNITY MASONIC HALL, UNITY, MAINE**

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Barry McCormick, John McIntire, Jo Kenney, Tony Avilla, Randy Reynolds, Mark Nickerson, Nancy Zane, Donald Newell, Emily Newell

OBSERVERS: Jean Bourg, Charles Porter, Clem Blakney, Chris Rossignol

RECORDER: Sherry Powell-Wilson

Jim Kenney opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Jim opened the meeting by requesting ideas of how to get started. He asked if everyone had reviewed the notes from last week's meeting, and if we are ready to go public with them (put them up on the website).

Jean: I suggest that the Minutes be posted online as soon as possible following posting of the meeting notice.

Jim read the Minutes from last week's meeting and asked for a motion to accept as read.

Barry McCormick: I make the motion to accept.

All in favor.

Jim: I would like to discuss some ground rules for these meetings, the importance of understanding each other, what the expectations for participation will be, and how everyone is expected to contribute.

Jim then went around the table and asked each member to discuss what, starting out, their expectations are and what they would like to see accomplished.

Barry: It is important that we have someone serve as moderator. It would be that person's position to keep the meetings moving and on task. I make the motion that Jim serve as chairperson. We're all here for the same purpose, and I would like to see Jim stay as the chairperson, we would get a lot more accomplished. What I would like to see happen tonight is that we get a plan, one that we all feel is a good direction to head, and come up with ideas to do that. I would like to see the various districts and zones in the Town of Unity identified (to start). I would like to see clarification of where the various districts start and stop, and the various rules clarified as to what applies to each district. Even people in this room don't understand themselves where the lines are.

Barry reiterated the importance of identifying the zones, the boundaries, that we need to go through the paperwork and identify everything that will fit into certain general regulations, i.e., if there are setbacks of 50 feet, if that setback will apply to all of them.

Barry: I would suggest perhaps a booklet for each district that would be easy to understand, a guide to compliance, something that could be obtained at the Town Office in easy to understand language.

Don Newell: My purpose is to have a hard look at the whole package because this was developed by us quite a while ago. Things have changed.

Barry: We're all here in the interest of all the people in the town, to have a course of action for each critical area.

John McIntire: In looking through this (the current ordinance book), people would have a difficult time with it. It does need to be reorganized. It is interesting the little omissions here and there that I picked out without looking too hard. You have to look in various places to cover all of the bases, and that does not make a whole lot of sense, just how it is all laid out. Is there was a reason for not including the maps in the document?

Barry: John is right, we really need to know where these lines are and if they make sense.

Jo Kenney: I am here to help in any way I can. As an attorney, just thought I can look at things from a legal perspective. An idea is to combine information as appendices, definitions, combine information in the different zones a little bit, you could do as appendices. What I hope to do is basically collectively help in any way I can and really study it.

Tony Avilla: I would like to have this document to encourage people to move to Unity, pick it up, go through the process and build in Unity, and develop Unity. I agree with Barry and Jim, it should be simple. It should not be such a task to build a business or build a home. You should not have to make adjustments as you go, it needs to be fair across the board for everybody. Also, look to protect each set zone in Unity, not bend rules and make ordinances as we go.

Mark Nickerson: We need to simplify the process. We need to look at all the aspects, and tweak and fix, remove outdated things. We need to simplify the process for anyone who wants to do anything.

Nancy Zane: I agree with the need to make the process more simplistic in understanding the steps of what needs to be done. I like the idea of separate booklets for each zone having just one document to support that zone. I do have a couple things, I would just suggest a survey to find out what kinds of business the town would like to attract. Conduct a survey to see what types of things people are interested in.

Jim: Nancy, we're going to move on that but will come back to that point.

Emily Newell: A couple things we could touch on, again, is we could go to the planning board for guidance, we need guidelines for people who want to build a house and we could say, "here are your guidelines."

Charles Porter: The biggest thing is the table of contents, what you have here I can look to page 23, section C, and go right to what I want to look at. I don't know what happened to the old table of contents but it disappeared

Jean: I see a mixture of improvements, appearance, table of contents, I would like to see maps included. I want to know that by the end of the process, you have had a lot of input from town's people.

Jim: Jean, how many hits a day do we get on the Unity page?

Jean: 150 people subscribe to our weekly newsletter.

Jim: If we sent out 1000 survey letters, we would be lucky to get 60 back. With the Unity.org website, there are 100 or so hits right there of people who have a direct interest in Unity.

Nancy: By mail is ridiculous. I would suggest electronic surveys, and we could leave a paper copy at some of the shops in town, and we could bring those results to the meeting. This could reach everyone who doesn't have access to computers, by leaving a copy at every business.

Randy Reynolds: Randy read down through a list of items he would like to see covered, if not at this meeting, at future meetings, and potential issues that need to be addressed. This list included such items as a plan to update citizens quarterly, add the agenda and meeting minutes to the Town of Unity website, elect a chairperson and secretary for the Committee, etc. One item regarding different types of businesses, such as an adult bookstore, prompted Charlie Porter to advise that the Town does have a standalone obscenity law in place.

Nancy: I had obtained some information from the US Census Bureau regarding projected population growth and for Waldo County alone it was rather bleak at -1.9 to 1%. A bigger picture for this Committee would be to consider how to bring people to the Town of Unity to combat that negative growth picture.

Jean: I obtained information through a government study from a couple months ago that predicts Unity's population to be under 2400 by year 2030, although Waldo County may see negative growth. The population growth for Unity was very small.

Jim: The work that could be done by this committee could attract businesses and provide employment. When I left Unity years ago, there was no work in this area in what I was interested in doing. Maine is not a place to attract businesses any longer and some of that is that it is hard for businesses to come into the area with all the taxation and make an investment. Randy has brought us some maps to look over but, before we get into that, one of the tasks we need to do is develop this document (the Land Use Ordinance Guide).

Randy: There is an electronic version of this document already.

Jim: We need someone to serve as document manager, someone who will manage the revisions to that document. Is there anyone who has an overwhelming desire to be that person?

Randy: I would like to do it but I may need some help.

Jim: One of the things I would like to see are standalone sections where someone could come into the Town Office and select the appropriate packet. For example, if someone was trying to attract a particular investor this this area, they could just come in and pick up the proper packet.

Barry: These guides should include what businesses are in town, residences, information about Unity and its assets.

Emily: A "how-to" guide would be great.

Barry: As a business person, what is so frustrating to me is there was no one to tell me what I needed to do. Tell me what I need to do and I'll be glad to follow the guidelines. I don't want to do two weeks of labor if I don't have to. Somebody in the town needs to take it upon themselves to streamline the process. I believe that the more we do to improve the town that everyone will benefit, such as I will sell more gas, Don will sell more houses. Just as an example, the first thing people see when they stop in the center of town is the appearance of the old doc's house, although I have since learned those people are veterans.

Don: That the property is teetering on foreclosure at this time. I had actually called the waste container company to remove their receptacle as it wasn't being used, that it was a shame to keep imposing a monthly fee and they did finally get it out of there.

Don: I have worked with a group offering to help people in the area make improvements to their homes, such as weatherizing homes, and it is very hard to get people to participate in these programs although we did have a college student knocking on doors explaining the program and that was very effective. Perhaps we could have neighborhood meetings to get the word out, or perhaps we could talk to 8-10 people who live around us, asking what they would be interested in, what they would like to see brought to the area. To shift gears, we need to look at population data and have our plan reflect information, determine what the market is, how many people come through or to this town on a daily basis. Could Unity be a hub market due to our services and businesses?

Barry: I actually did a lot of research years ago, a bunch of market surveys in 1999, the population at that time was around 12,500, now currently more like 17,000. Barry said we need to know more about the people that we service in a certain area. How many families, how many people, how much do they spend, income? Basically, a survey that would draw a circle around the town. We've got the banks, the post office, businesses - what entices people to come to Unity? Unity College has a big piece of that.

Don: The takeaway for me is how much has moved in town while the population has stayed the same, 10,000, then 12,000, and now 17,000.

Barry: We haven't added all the right pieces so people from out of town are comfortable coming to Unity. We have not added a ton of businesses. It all kind of goes hand in hand.

Mark: I have a good friend who is the chief of police of a hub town with a population of only 4,000-5,000. Because of businesses such as a Wal Mart and various markets, the population increases to, 22,000 every day.

Randy: There are 2 or 3 businesses looking to come into town right now but are partially holding back due to the ordinances.

Barry: What are the zoning issues, what do I have to do? The rules shouldn't change halfway through the process, we need to make it simple, and if I can't meet the guidelines than that is my problem.

Don: There should be a process where a potential client who wants to have a business in Unity, their first stop could be to sit with the planning board just to discuss and lay out what they want to accomplish. It could be an informal meeting to inquire about feelings regarding the project, perhaps there is a better place to set up. I have actually done that in several communities over the years and it is very effective. Just go in and sit with a group of citizens and ask them, 'are you interested in this business?' What do we have to do to get this thing going formally, and you get some help that way.

Randy talked about a difficulty he perceived with a member of the Planning Board a few years back when Downeast Credit Union wanted to come into town and the perceived negativity to attracting new business.

Jim: I need to remind you that members of the Planning Board are not present to defend themselves.

Randy: I would be hesitant about going before the Planning Board to bring a new business into town.

Jim: We're going to work on things we need to fix. If citizens come in we should do what we have done here, ask them their thoughts and a very brief input.

Discussion ensued regarding continued meetings here at the Masonic hall, if it would conflict with Rita's business, dates of future meetings.

Barry: I make a motion to have the meeting at the Masonic Lodge every Wednesday night as long as there is no conflict.

Jim: We could check the calendar against blocked-out dates. If the Lodge is booked on a Wednesday night, perhaps there would be space at the Common Grounds.

Don: What expenses we were incurring here, such as heat, electricity?

Randy: It would be just heat; I came here this afternoon to turn it up. I will talk with the ones in charge next week

Don: Perhaps the Committee could make a donation of sorts.

Randy: This is a good spot, easy access for citizens. The Lodge would be more than willing to help out the Town.

Jim: I would also like you to know that our recorder, Sherry Powell-Wilson, a student in court reporting, is taking the meeting minutes for free and suggested a collection on her behalf.

Jim: I open the floor for discussion.

Barry: The motion on the floor is for Wednesday night.

All in favor.

Barry: We need to set a timeframe on this meeting.

Jim: Just a reminder that Jo will be in Indiana next Wednesday.

Randy produced a booklet from KVCOG on planning land use.

Charlie: It's not up to date, but Susan has ordered 5 of them.

Randy: Not much has changed.

Jean: They are \$20.00 ordered on line.

Randy then led the group through the maps that included the village district, rural district, growth district, and downtown.

Barry: For businesses coming into the village district, it would be good to maintain the character of the town, to keep it the same, but for outside the village district to have more leniencies, to differentiate between the zones

Randy: I agree that it would make sense to retain the good features of the village district, which might make it even more enticing to build outside.

Nancy: I like the theory of the cluster development, the convenience of everything being close together such as businesses, especially within walking distance.

Jim: It is now 7:30, we don't want to dwell on one particular map but we will at some point."

Chris Rossignol arrived.

Clem Blakney arrived.

Mark: As it is now, if you build a business in the rural district, you have to live there, i.e., the Amish. Outside of that, as it is now, the only new businesses can be a lawn mower shop or a chain saw shop.

Jim talked about his father, James Kenney, and how he had developed a business that today, with the ordinances, he wouldn't be able to. That business, between Parson's, employed 130 people. He stated how regulations took them out of business.

Jim: What is the end time?

Emily: We're all mumbling that it should be 8 o'clock.

Don pointed out an area on the map that is critical to maintain as pristine being an aquifer water system for the town.

Jim: That will need to be clearly understood in the new ordinance.

Discussion regarding equipment, such as an easel, to use in viewing the maps during the meetings and who has access to what and can bring in to the meetings.

Jim: I'm going to "claim the floor for a couple of moments." We need to have a target completion for our meetings instead of spending all night here."

Don: I move to limit meetings to 1-1/2 hours.

Jim: We will arrive at 6:30 and leave at 8:00 but we must leave time to open the floor to any citizens who join us.

Jo: I don't think that 1-1/2 hours will be enough time to accomplish what is needed; subcommittees may be necessary.

Mark: Something that would be helpful to us is getting more town ordinances from different towns; this could be a homework assignment.

Barry: I currently have Burnham, Troy, Thorndike. We should get Dixmont - this is to start with. Albion as well.

Don: Can we get this online and scanned, save as pdf files?

Jim: It is critical that we see all of these. Unity can become the model for other towns to follow if we do this right. Let's get all the good ideas we can get, let's make our document for others to come get. If we get them as hard copy, I can get them scanned.

Jean: We can put on line but in a manner so that it would not be publically accessible.

Randy: Who is taking care of upkeep of e-mail addresses?

Jim: Somewhere down the line it will be important to invite John Piotti in for his thoughts; his experience would be beneficial to pull this together.

Barry: Will this information be made available to anyone who requests to see it? Specifically, will the Planning Board get advance notice so they won't be slammed?

Randy: This Committee has a lot of information to digest.

Jo: John Piotti could help with the drafting. In my experience, it is extremely difficult to get a committee to sit down and write anything effectively, and I strongly advise for subgroups to work on pieces and then to bring it all together as a group

Don: It is important for this group to be organized.

Emily: At the next meeting will we be talking about zone expansion or changes?

Jim: How much time is reasonable to pull this together?

Emily: It could take weeks.

Jim: Okay, will this be next week's subject?

Randy: I recommended that we keep everything "scope wide" and not just go with the current ordinance, to consider other businesses, commercial zoning.....

Jim: Let's start with a clean slate. Get out that document, pull out sections....

Barry: If we can identify the zones as a group, then we can start organizing this.

Nancy: If we get first identify the zones, then break into subcommittees and come back with our plan for each zone.

Emily: I think the group as a whole should consider how those zones could change and then the subgroups could start writing the words.

Barry: I think we have such a task ahead of us, try to get the zones organized first, get the information attached to the zones and then readdress.

Randy: Since I will taking care of the ordinance, look at the ordinance see the different parts and how certain ordinances talk about certain things....document that and we can start bringing them together so we know which area we are talking about.

Don: It seems to me, if I am reading it right, it is a one-person job to go through that book and pull out everything to do with the village district, then the rural district, and so on.

Barry: I disagree with that to a point. Your interpretations may be different from mine.

Jim: What I am hearing you say, somebody needs to make that list and that becomes the "strawman" to build on?

Don: We can start narrowing down that list. We need to focus if we're going to look at that. Sorting that out, coming to the next meeting with here are the things I found in the book.

Randy: Mark a section, i.e., page 8, b or c and pop it right in there to see what we're dealing with.

Emily: I will do the village district.

Barry: Go through the book and pick out what you feel, fish out and revise.

Don: All of us should be reading and looking at this.

Randy: If it does not pertain to what we're dealing with.....

Don: Are you going to do it digitally, make it simple?

Emily: The tax maps are online.

Randy: (referring to maps) If I can get that, can also blow that up.

John: If we all shared that upfront....know what we're looking at.

Chris: There should be five more of those coming.

Randy: We should one for each member of the committee.

Jim: We're coming to a close. The agenda for next week seems kind of full. We will open the floor to any citizen who shows up. Any other thoughts?

Barry: I'm hoping everyone has read this thing two or three times.

Randy: It will make more sense.

Jim: Any other thoughts before we wrap up?

Barry: Do we have a chair for next meeting?

Jim: It will be myself. If there is a conflict, we will cover you. Final thought, we have a common mission and, therefore, we will work together very well to accomplish that mission. When all is done, this is for the other 2099 people in town. It is for those people when we're done.

Emily: We're going to look at the individual districts, see what it says, and what we might change?

Barry: And what does it say at this point.

Jim: Look very specifically at those paragraphs, get it out to us and we can make it grow. The downtown district will not be settled just like that.

Mark: I think we should just look at the village district for next week.

Jo: We will need a written agenda for every meeting, and how soon will the notes of the prior meeting be available for the next meeting?

Sherry: They will be available the day after the meeting and will be e-mailed as an attachment to the Sue Lombard.

Jim Kenney adjourned the meeting promptly at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sherry E. Powell-Wilson, Notary Public