

**ALTON PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP  
MINUTES OF 2021  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2021**

**APPROVED**

**Members Physically Present:**

Drew Carter, Chairman  
Bill O'Neil, Alternate (Arrived at 6:45 P.M. +/-)

**Members Appearing Remotely:**

Bob Regan, Vice-Chairman, Home alone  
Russ Wilder, Clerk, Home alone  
Tom Hoopes, Member, Home alone

**Others Physically Present:**

Jessica A. Call, Town Planner  
Amelia Cate, Planning Secretary/Zoom Moderator

***UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE: To keep our members and staff safe, and to comply with RSA 91-A, the COVID-19 State of Emergency, and the Governor's Orders on restrictions at public gatherings, the Town of Alton has moved from "in-person" meetings to "remote audio participation meetings". To remotely attend the meeting visit our website: [www.alton.nh.gov](http://www.alton.nh.gov), for the conference call and Zoom access instructions listed under "News and Announcements" on the home page. If you are having difficulties accessing the meeting, please call (603) 507-1002.***

**Call to Order**

Mr. Carter called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. +/-

**Approval of Agenda**

Ms. Call asked the Board if they wanted to discuss the need for a definition for "Electronic Charging Station". It was noted that charging stations could be installed at gas stations or at other business sites throughout town, like "Self-Storage Facilities". Mr. Wilder suggested to add a provision for electronic charging stations to the current definition #12 "Automotive Service Station". This provision may need to become a separate use in the future. Mr. Hoopes noted that there were housing associations that did not allow property owners to have charging stations at their houses.

Ms. Call guided the Board to Page 9, Definitions. #35 "Drive-in Restaurant", this definition was listed in the Alton Zoning Ordinance as, "Restaurant, Drive-in". A question was asked if "drive-thru" should be added to this. Ms. Call noted that "drive-thru" was listed as "Restaurant, Fast Food". Definition #37 "Duplex" was updated in the Alton Zoning Ordinance (Z.O.) through a warrant article that was passed last year. Definition #38 "Dwelling, Single-Family", was listed twice (#40), she was going to delete #40.

Ms. Call noted that when she reviewed the section, "Definitions", roughly 70 of them came directly from the Z.O., and she felt that if the definitions were updated in the Z.O., they would be out of date in the Site Plan Regulations (Regs.) and people would be getting the wrong information when they did their research. First she proposed to have the definitions in the Site Plan Regs. separated into two (2) lists, one (1) list that included definitions directly related in the Site Plans Regs., and then a second list of definitions that pertained directly to the Z.O. She was going to check with Town Counsel, but she thought that she could go in and update the definitions in the Site Plan Regs. as an administrative action because the definitions would have had a public

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hearing as a Proposed Zoning Amendment. Mr. Wilder noted that the definitions that were from the Z.O. may have a different context in the Site Plan Regs.

A second scenario she had was with the definitions that were the same as the Z.O., to make a notation after the definition like, “as amended”, or “See Zoning Ordinance for updates”. Mr. Wilder thought that maybe just leaving the title of the definition and write “See Zoning Ordinance”. Ms. Call agreed with that option, which was her third option. Mr. Carter was concerned that if someone came in to get the Site Plan Regs., they would have to get a second set of regs for the ordinances. Mr. Hoopes noted that if someone was coming in with an application, they would have to refer to the Z.O. anyways. Ms. Call noted that both the Site Plan Regs. and the Z.O. were available online. Mr. Hoopes thought that the update should be as simple as possible. The Board thought that the definitions referring to the Z.O. was the best option.

Ms. Call noted that definitions were missing for “Multi-Family Structure” and “Townhouse”, which were approved last year in a warrant article. “Dwelling, Multi-Family” was changed to “Multi-Family Structure”. Mr. Hoopes did not think it made sense to change it to “Multi-Family Structure”, because then that definition was listed away from “Dwelling, Single-Family”.

Mr. Hoopes asked about the definition on Page 12 for “Historic Structure”. He asked if the Town had any requirements when people wanted to tear down a historic building. Ms. Call stated that the building department had a process for demolitions. Mr. Carter did not think that the Town had anything specific in writing. Mr. Hoopes thought that this should go on for ZAC next year. Mr. Hoopes noted that if there was a historic building in town there should be some process to go through before it was demolished. Mr. Wilder asked who would perform the review and who had the authority. He noted that other towns that had Historic Commissions had regulations on tearing down historic buildings. The current definition was suggested to stay in place. Ms. Call was going to ask the Building Inspector if he had any protocols on demolishing historic structures.

Ms. Call noted that at the last workshop, it was suggested to add a definition for “Modular Homes”. She found that RSA 205-C Modular Building Standards regulated modular homes. She thought that she could do some further research on this and come up with a definition.

Page 16 definition #98 “Reference Line”. It was a definition that was a Proposed Zoning Amendment for this year and she was waiting for the annual town vote and would update it after that depending upon whether it passed or not.

The definition “Restaurant, Drive-in” in the Z.O. was currently listed as “Drive-in Restaurant”. Ms. Call noted that she would relist it. Mr. Regan noted that there was an adjective defining the definition, and then with others, the adjective was listed further on in the title of the definition. It was inconsistent and he wondered if that should be looked at and addressed.

Page 26, top of the page, there was a list that included the departments that received a copy of the final site plan after it was signed and dated by the Chair. The Building and Assessing Departments informed Ms. Call that they did not need a copy of the final plan. She suggested to cut down on the number of plans submitted from five (5) to three (3). She noted that those departments would just look at the Planning Department’s file

if they had any questions. A question was asked how the Assessing Department was informed of new site plans. Ms. Call noted that Amelia Cate, Planning Secretary, had a spreadsheet that tracked each application and it included the book and page number of a plan, and the dates that plans were signed; this spreadsheet would be shared with the Assessing Department monthly. The Assessing Department really only needed the book and page number of a plan and then he could go online to the Registry to look at a plan, if needed. Mr. Hoopes was concerned that people had access to planning files without supervision because there were problems in the past with items getting lost. Ms. Call noted that when people came in to look at a file, if it was a large file, they would sit in the Heidke Room with the people looking at the file so they were supervised.

Page 31, SECTION 1.26 Revocation of a Recorded Approval. Ms. Call noted that the Town of Alton did not record site plans. Mr. Hoopes noted that the Board used to. Ms. Call asked if the Board wanted to delete it or keep it in just in case they decided to start recording site plans again. Mr. Wilder recommended to put in a note that the Town did not record site plans. Ms. Call noted in the cover page of the applications, it noted that Minor and Major Site Plans were not recorded. Mr. Wilder thought the section should be retitled and that the town did not record site plans. He also noted that the correct terminology was called the “recording of plats”. She thought that was a good idea to refer to the RSA on recording plats. Mr. Carter thought that it should also be noted that it would be up to the applicant’s responsibility to record the plat. Mr. Wilder noted that it was optional for towns to record site plans. Ms. Call noted that she would retitle the regulation and the definition.

Page 33, SECTION 2.01 Conceptual Consultation (B) Ms. Call added wording for the Board to require a .pdf for the application and the accompanying documents. Mr. Wilder asked if this should be more of a general thing. Ms. Call noted that she listed this requirement under Minor, Design Review, and Major so it was clear in each section and it would not get missed. Mr. Carter asked if a definition was needed for .pdf; Ms. Call stated, no.

Page 39, SECTION 3.01 (F) Site Plan Requirements. Ms. Call noted that she changed it so only one (1) large plan needed to accompany an application because she did not need two (2) copies. Mr. Hoopes suggested that the dimension of the plan should indicate “non-waiverable” because the larger plans had a hard time fitting into the files. Mr. Regan suggested to clarify the description of the standard paper sizes as follows: 11” x 17” “(B size)” and 22” x 34” “(D size)”. Ms. Call noted she would change the Regs. and the applications as well.

Page 41, #11, Ms. Call added the Cemetery and Assessing Departments to receive department head reviews.

Ms. Call noted that in the sections for Design Review and Major application submittals, she did the same as she did for Minor applications and indicated that only one (1) copy of the plan needed to be submitted with the application.

Mr. Carter, noted that on Page 81, “Maintenance-Proof” was indicated to be deleted. She noted that it was listed weird and she wasn’t sure where that fit in. Mr. Carter wondered if the Board asked for maintenance bonds. Mr. Hoopes noted that the Town should only be accepting a bond, or cash. He wanted to know what the policy was. Ms. Call noted that the Site Plan Regs. only referred to a letter of credit, but the Subdivision Regs. allowed for bonding. Mr. Hoopes thought that Ms. Call should talk to Town Counsel about what type of surety should be accepted for site plans.

No further comments on the Regs. from the Board or Ms. Call. The Board moved on to review the Applications.

“Conceptual Consultation” applications. Ms. Call noted that she added the comment about the Board requiring .pdfs for applications and accompanying documents. Ms. Carter thought that the word “also” should be moved after “to also be submitted.....”. Ms. Call would make the wording consistent with the Regs. as well.

“Minor Site Plan Review” applications. Ms. Call wanted to address the statement at the bottom of the cover page that stated, “These fees are non-refundable”; this statement conflicted with the “Application Fee Schedule”, which stated, “Please note, application fees are non-refundable, unless approved by the Planning Board”. Mr. Hoopes noted that sometimes that Board would refund an applicant’s money if they had to come back again and again. Ms. Call noted that when an application came in and they cashed the check, if an applicant wanted a refund it would come out of the Department’s budget and she only had \$200 put aside for refunds. Mr. Hoopes noted that the fees went into the General Fund. Ms. Call noted that there were times with applications that kept coming in before the Board, she did not cash the check because it would cost the Department a lot of money in the long run if refunds were given. She further noted that if a check was submitted and it was for a larger amount, she would call the applicant to let them know and ask them to resubmit their check for the proper amount. Mr. Hoopes thought that Board members should be aware that the refunds came out of the Department’s budget. Mr. Wilder asked why the fees went into the General Fund. Mr. Hoopes stated that all income went into the General Fund. Mr. Carter asked how often refunds took place and what were the circumstances. Ms. Call noted that it did not happen often. Mr. Hoopes stated that it only occurred a couple of times that he was aware of, and those circumstances had to do with acquaintances of Board members. Mr. Carter noted that was not going to happen again. He thought that the fees should be non-refundable across the board. Ms. Call was going to make the changes in the Regs along with all of the applications.

Further in the Minor Site Plan application it referenced “not submitting recording fees for the plans with the application”. Ms. Call was going to delete that in accordance with what they discussed earlier. Another section she updated was to explain further what the envelopes for abutters were for, how many sets, and who they went to. It was also noted that “plan sets should be folded and rolled plans would not be accepted”. She noted she was going to take that out because it was not a real issue. She noted that she would amend the section where it stated how many plans should be submitted with the application down to one (1) set as previously discussed. Mr. Wilder noted that she should also add “B size” and “D size”. The next comment referred to the submission of the application and accompanying documents in the form of a .pdf. Another comment was deleted regarding the recording of site plans. Ms. Call also wanted to clarify what took place when a final plan was submitted to be signed. Mr. Carter noted that the Town of Alton did not record site plans and asked if they ever got recorded. Ms. Call noted that the site plan was just placed into the file. Mr. Regan wanted to know if the Heidke room was the only place that the Planning Department stored their files and he wondered if there were any other plans for the future to have more space. Ms. Carter thought that maybe an electronic format should be used. Ms. Call stated that the plans could not be gotten rid of. She noted that the Planning and Building Departments have had many discussions with the IT Department about having an updated program to scan in files, and hopefully, have the opportunity to have this program available

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on the Town's website as well. Mr. Regan thought that "records management" should be added to the Master Plan.

Mr. O'Neil arrived at 6:55 pm.

Ms. Call noted that the only other change on the application was on the "Application Fee Schedule" where she clarified the submission of the abutter fee and who that referred to. She noted that it was confusing for people. Mr. Wilder asked if there was a definition of "Abutter"; Ms. Call stated, yes. Mr. Wilder stated that with the recent court case involving the Conservation Commission, the Commission was now considered as an abutter. Ms. Call stated that the Board's definition came directly from the RSA. Mr. Wilder thought that the court case set a precedence with the Town. Mr. Hoopes thought that Town Counsel should be consulted.

The Design Review application did not have the handy cover sheet like the other applications, so Ms. Call would draft one up. There were not many changes, but she did update the need to submit .pdfs. Mr. Carter noted to change the note about fees being "non-refundable".

The Major Site Plan Review application cover page was similar to the Minor Site Plan application so she was proposing the same changes as the Minor application. The "Application Fee Schedule" clarified the abutter fees like she did with the Minor application, and she would add that the fees were "non-refundable". Mr. Wilder noted that if someone was submitting a Major Site Plan application, the abutter's list should also include easement holders, like utilities, and rights-of-way. He suggested that Ms. Call discuss this with Town Counsel. Mr. Carter wondered if that should be included in the checklist. Ms. Call noted that it would. She further noted that the Regs. stated that the Planning Department was not responsible for the content of the abutter's list, but they did confirm them so every abutter got notified properly.

Ms. Call stated that she was still working on updating Construction Observation Guidelines, and the minutes from the first workshop.

Ms. Call noted that on Page 16, she added a new definition, "Regional Planning Commission". She added all of the Planning Commissions that abutted the Lakes Region Planning Commission. Mr. Wilder did not think that all of those Commissions needed to be listed, therefore, only Lakes Region Planning Commission and Strafford Regional Planning Commission would be listed.

**Adjournment**

**Mr. Hoopes MOVED to adjourn.**

**Mr. Regan seconded the motion.**

**Mr. Carter called for a roll call vote:**

**Tom Hoopes, Aye; Russ Wilder, Aye; Bob Regan, Aye; Drew Carter, Aye.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 P.M. +/-

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Call, Town Planner

Minutes approved as amended: May 18, 2021