

Richmond Planning Board Meeting  
Town Hall  
Minutes  
July 10, 2017

Members present: Rick Bell, Adeline Ellis, Katherine Keenum, John Vittori (Chairman)

Member absent: John Hanson

Others present: Neal Pilson, Richmond Board of Selectmen; Brenda Trieweiler, CFO, The Children's Study Home, Inc.

Mr. Vittori opened the meeting at 6:30 P.M. by calling on Mr. Pilson, who had asked to speak because, with the impending legalization of recreational marijuana in the Commonwealth, the Board of Selectmen believed it should deliberate sooner rather than later on whether a local by-law was needed.

1. Mr. Pilson explained that the Board of Selectmen had learned that Lenox and West Stockbridge have received inquiries about the possibility of medical marijuana dispensaries being opened in those towns. The Richmond Select Board wanted recommendations from other relevant boards and commissions on three issues:

- (a) growing,
- (b) medical dispensaries,
- (c) retail shops.

He noted that Richmond had voted in favor of ballot Question 4 [the Massachusetts Marijuana Legalization Initiative] in November 8, 2017, which legalized possession of recreational marijuana.

As an action item, Mr. Vittori proposed that each member of the Planning Board research the issue for a discussion at the next meeting with the intention of sending a report to the Select Board within sixty days. The members agreed, and Mr. Pilson expressed satisfaction with the timetable.

2. Mr. Vittori next introduced discussion of a solar by-law.

Ms. Keenum asked Mr. Pilson whether he thought the Board of Selectmen would be amenable to a joint meeting with the Planning Board to discuss the issue. She pointed out that the state recommends consultation with all relevant municipal officials including the zoning enforcement officer and safety officials when solar by-laws are being drawn up. Mr. Pilson said he thought his board would be willing.

Mr. Vittori asked about the selectmen's thinking on the question of allowing installation of solar panels in Richmond. A town by-law already specifies the allowable locations for large-scale arrays (i.e., the town dump and town land adjacent to the school). Homeowners can install roof-mounted panels by right. The zoning question would be how much regulation, if any, should be imposed on small and medium ground-mounted systems. Mr. Pilson replied that the selectmen had no position but it was certainly happening all over town. Mr. Vittori

said that other towns have written by-laws putting in regulations about esthetics, locations, and size of installations; these were the issues the Planning Board was looking at.

Mr. Pilson reported that the selectmen were investigating the installation of a community solar farm to power the school and a possible new town hall and library. The town should be guided by analyses of benefits to the taxpayers.

As an action item, Mr. Vittori said that he would speak to Mark Pruhenski, the Town Administrator, about setting up a public meeting on solar energy to let town officials brainstorm together and hear opinions from the people of Richmond. Mr. Bell suggested that attendance would probably be better if the meeting were held under the auspices of the Board of Selectmen.

3. Mr. Vittori introduced Brenda Treiweiler, CFO of The Children's Study Home, a non-profit organization founded in 1865. She appeared before the board at Ms. Ellis's suggestion to give an informational presentation about its Mill Pond School, which was being moved from the grounds of the former Eagleton School in Great Barrington to the premises of the Berkshire Community Church on Cemetery Road. Students with social, emotional, and/or behavioral problems are referred by the Local Education Agencies to the school. An adult-to-student ratio of 1:4 is maintained. Although the program is a day school and children are bussed in, no more than sixteen students are envisaged for the site and Ms. Treiweiler said there should be no impact on the road. All necessary permits had been acquired; no zoning issues were involved.
4. Discussion of the Master Plan was tabled while the more pressing issues of marijuana and solar energy are being dealt with.
5. Mr. Vittori requested a change to the draft of the minutes for the meeting of June 12, 2017. The minutes were then passed unanimously as amended.

The clerk failed to record the exact time at which the meeting was dismissed, but it was roughly 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Katherine Keenum, Clerk