

What's It Like To Be On The Planning Board?

By Roger Godwin

Andover Planning Board, ex officio

Some of us shy away from public service because we don't know what a particular job will require and we fear becoming overcommitted. That's reasonable enough, but local volunteer jobs require organization more than they do an excess of time.

Here is what I've seen of the Planning Board, whose work I've watched for 15 years as a selectman and a dozen years as the selectmen's delegate to the Planning Board.

Memberships on the land-use boards like the Planning Board are the most important memberships around. Those boards define in every meeting what our community is going to look like decades from now.

It doesn't take specialized expertise to be on the Board. In fact, the wider the range of talents, the better. Our Planning Board currently is staffed by an engineer, an education administrator, a professional forester (and talented baker, who brings his chocolate chip treats to meetings for all to share), a retired executive, a lawyer, a former town Road Agent, a draftsman, a realtor ... all bringing their expertise and experience, to the good of the Board and the town.

A variety of backgrounds is important because the main job of the Planning Board is planning. That includes everything from the fundamental importance of updating the town's Master

Plan to drafting zoning ordinance amendments for votes at town meetings, and from the adoption of new regulations (subdivision of land, site plan review for commercial development, sand and gravel excavation) to the application of existing regulations to proposed land uses.

Homework? There's some, particularly at first. Applicants deserve a balanced and knowledgeable application of the rules, and there are occasional site visits, it being helpful to look at the land to visualize what an applicant has in mind, whether it makes sense, and how the rules fit the facts.

The time commitment? For the Planning Board, it is two evenings a month, generally 7 PM to 9 or 9:30. Those who opt to be more active members of the Master Plan Update Committee attend that group's monthly meetings as well.

The reward? The satisfaction of knowing you've helped a fellow resident in ways that are fair to both the person and the community, and that you've contributed your abilities to keeping and making Andover a good community for us all.

Please call Planning Board chair Don Gould (735-5040), vice chair Eric Johnson (735-5602), or any selectman (735-5332) to inquire further.

Editor's Note: To get a good sense of the "nitty gritty" of what actually happens during a Planning Board meeting, be sure to read the Board's minutes on page 9.

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Board Of Selectmen

April 17

Condensed from approved minutes

Present: Chairman Dennis Fenton, Selectmen Roger Godwin and Andrew Gupstill, Town Administrator Mark Stetson.

The Board reviewed and approved an application for Current Use for property on Bay Road.

The Board approved a request from the Andover One Wheelers to use a portion of the lawn and parking lot on the north side of the Town Hall on May 6 for a yard sale.

The Board discussed with Road Agent John Thompson the status of the spring-time road postings and, upon the recommendation of Thompson, decided that the postings should be removed.

After a lengthy discussion, the Board approved increases for hourly rates paid for much of the equipment hired to perform summer maintenance work. Per the Board's previous commitment, the increase was retroactive to March 20.

The Board met with Joe Stearns who asked the Board to accept his resignation as a member of the Planning Board.

The Board then met with Marlene Dukette who sought the Board's opinion as to how she should go about legalizing a small apartment that she created in a detached garage. As the Town's zoning ordinance does not permit such a use, the Board instructed her to seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. She was told that, if the Zoning Board

denies her request, the structure will have to revert back to its previous use.

The Board then met with Police Chief Glenn Laramie who told the Selectmen that the department logged 277 calls for service during the previous 30-day period. He also told the Board that this is an unusually high number for this time of year.

Laramie distributed copies of a state law that was recently enacted that makes it illegal for anyone under the age of 16 to operate a bicycle in a public way without a helmet. He indicated that his department intends to provide education and warnings for a period of time before actually issuing summonses. The penalty for violating the statute is a \$35 fine.

The Board signed a renewal application for the Town to be able to purchase surplus items from the state and federal government at the White Farm in Concord.

The Board accepted the resignation of Dennis Wright from the position of dog officer and decided to advertise the position in the *Beacon*.

In response to a request from the City of Franklin, the Board nominated Don Gould and Bob Welch to serve on the Webster/Highland Lake Partnership Committee.

The Board then met with Don Gross, the newly-elected chairman of the Zoning Board of Adjustment. A general discussion about the zoning ordinance ensued. Gross reminded the Selectmen of the two

See Selectmen on page 9



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