

**TOWN OF EATON
PLANNING BOARD
January 15, 2025**

The Planning Board held their regular meeting on January 15, 2025, at 6:00 pm. Present were Chairman Dennis Sullivan, Judy Wilson, Selectmen's Representative Greg Grinnell, Peter Klose, and John Hedden. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm and Chairman Sullivan appointed alternate Peter Klose as a Board Member for the evening.

Meeting Minutes

The Board reviewed the Minutes from November 20, 2024. Dennis Sullivan made two corrections. ***Judy Wilson made a motion to adopt the amended Minutes, seconded by Peter Klose. The motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.***

The Board reviewed the Minutes from December 18, 2024. ***John Hedden made a motion to approve the Minutes as written, seconded by Greg Grinnell. The motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.***

Select Board Report

Selectmen's Representative Greg Grinnell gave the Select Board Report. The Board Members were shown a map of the Choremi property. Potter Road, which is designated as scenic, runs through their land. The Choremi's would like to cut four trees along the road to make room for a pole to be installed so electricity can be run to their home. There is a question if the property owners need to seek Planning Board approval for cutting trees along a scenic road, since they own the land in question. Chairman Sullivan reviewed the information and determined that the RSA does not prevent tree cutting on your own land.

Selectmen's Representative Greg Grinnell also presented an email from a Charter School inquiring about buying a piece of property in Eaton upon which to build an educational farm. The property address is 00 Brownfield Road, Lot #4. The letter stated that while the Charter School was exempt from following Town and State Zoning Ordinances, they would like to work with the Town to make sure the property would work for a farm. Chairman Sullivan stated that while schools are exempt from following Zoning Ordinances, they are still required to follow environmental regulations. On the property in question, the part nearest to the road has wetlands. There is a shared driveway that goes across the wetland and steep slopes. Chairman Sullivan stated that the soil type on the property by the wetlands and steep slope is not good for farmland, but that the rest of the property has relatively good soil for farming. Chairman Sullivan stated that for now, the Planning Board needs to stay aware of the situation, and that it is a positive that the school wants to work with the Town. Chairman Sullivan stated that the Town should try to help the school find a solution that will have the least impact on the wetlands and steep slopes. Other concerns are the driveway permit, increased traffic into Town and space for parking.

John Hedden stated that the Board needs to consider if this would be a “tipping point” for the Town, and stated that if a school is located here, the Town might need to add services, such as fire and police. Peter Klose asked if the Board should contact the school now or wait for the school to approach the Board. Chairman Sullivan stated that the school has not purchased the land yet, and the Board can wait. John Hedden suggested being helpful and opening a line of communication with the school to keep the relationship positive. Chairman Sullivan agreed and stated that he would draft a letter with the Selectmen.

Selectmen’s Representative Greg Grinnell also reported that the survey done on Town Hall has been completed by Ron Briggs and it is now official.

Conservation Commission Report

Chairman Sullivan gave an update on the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission met with Emily Lucy, who will be the new blueberry harvester on Foss Mountain, and are encouraged by her plan and enthusiasm about this year’s harvest. Chairman Sullivan also reported that the Conservation Commission has reviewed some concerning water quality reports on Thurston Pond and other local waterways. The testing has revealed concerning levels of phosphorus and other contaminants pointing to possible septic tank contamination. The Select Board has been notified, and they will discuss approaching the community about their septic systems and work with the Town’s Highway Department on taking courses about low salt zones. The prescribed burns on Foss Mountain may not take place due to insurance issues with the Town. The Conservation Commission determined the idea to implement “Beaver Deceivers” will not work, because the dams are not high enough. Finally, the Conservation Commission noted that the majority of the responses on the Questionnaire are in favor of more protection of wetlands, and that they support doing so as well.

Madison Cell Phone Tower

Selectman’s Representative Greg Grinnell gave a report on the possibility of a cell phone tower being erected on the top of King Pine Ski Area Madison. It will be a 150’ “mono pole” style in design and will be located at the top of the ski hill. This is proving to be a heated topic for debate among abutters to King Pine, with many people attending the Madison Planning Board meeting to oppose the project. The Madison Planning Board meeting will be available to stream online, and a recorded version will also be available on their website. Selectmen’s Representative Greg Grinnell stated that if this cell phone tower gets approved in Madison, it would make the Town of Eaton’s cell phone tower redundant and no longer needed.

Master Plan

The Board worked on Chapter Two of the Master Plan, which is the “Quality of Life” section. Chairman Sullivan stated that Chapter Two should reflect the people’s vision for the Town. Selectmen’s Representative Greg Grinnell expressed concern over how some of the Questionnaire results had been categorized and stated that the organization

seemed to skew some of the responses in a negative way. Chairman Sullivan clarified that the seemingly negative responses have to do with that specific question, which is "What changes are occurring in Eaton that are most concerning to you?" and therefore the answers will be the concerns of the residents. Chairman Sullivan stated that there are many positive responses under more specific questions, such as the question regarding cell phone coverage. Selectmen's Representative Greg Grinnell addressed the Questionnaire responses regarding the concerns of residents about increased traffic on Route 153 and Brownfield Road. Selectman's Representative Greg Grinnell informed the Board about changes happening to Route 16 in Albany and stated that NHDOT is planning to install a roundabout and rumble strips in the median and expressed concern about people wanting to avoid that stretch of road and choosing to drive through Eaton, therefore increasing traffic even more. The Board discussed the issues with semi-trucks and trailers on Route 153 and the Questionnaire concerns regarding speed. Chairman Sullivan stated that Route 153 is a state road, and the State controls the speed limit, however, the Town can request a speed limit change.

The Board began to discuss the need for cell phone coverage in Town. George Diller commented that he likes the old cell tower document. John Hedden stated that the language in that document is twenty years old, and that he worries that could have a significant impact on the Town's ability to have a cell tower. John Hedden stated that per the last meeting, the language in that document will be updated. John Hedden stated that people are ready for cell phone service, and the Town just needs to figure out how to go about providing it. John Hedden stated that there should be a comment in the Master Plan on the importance of cell phone service in Town, and that the updated cell phone regulations need to address the concerns of preserving natural beauty but at the same time not impacting the ability to put in a tower.

The Board began to work on Chapter Two. John Hedden stated that he is happy with the current draft but suggested adding a section about the key risks to the Town and how to protect against them, such as: losing the Town's rural character, becoming financially unstable and needing to merge another town, water quality decreasing, or losing important local businesses. John Hedden and Peter Klose agreed to work together to write the key risks for the chapter.

Anne Jenkins expressed concerns about housing and population turnover and stated that she feels young people will not want to move here. The Board discussed the need for affordable housing for locals and limiting second homes and short-term rentals. Selectman's Representative Greg Grinnell stated that another issue holding back younger families from moving here is lack of jobs and lack of cell phone coverage, which limits the ability to work from home. Chairman Sullivan stated that affordable housing is a big issue and suggested allowing more apartment and room rentals. Selectman's Representative Greg Grinnell agreed with the Town needing more connectivity to make it possible for residents to have remote jobs, however he made it clear that the Selectmen's main reason for wanting cell phone coverage in Town is for safety.

The Board then discussed the format of the Master Plan. Peter Klose explained the reasoning behind the current formatting, which has an appendix, as being partly because of data storage problems ten years ago when it was written. We do not have those same issues today, so it was suggested by the Board to bring the appendix back into the main body of the Master Plan. Judy Wilson and John Hedden stated their preference for the Master Plan being one document and getting rid of the appendix. Chairman Sullivan stated that since data concerns are no longer relevant, the Town will be able to offer the full version of the new Master Plan online. Chairman Sullivan also noted that all the chapters in the Master Plan currently have a quote associated with them and asked the Board Members if they liked having the quotes or if they should be removed. The Board unanimously agreed to keep quotes for each chapter, but keeping open the possibility of updating or changing the specific quotes.

Greg Grinnell made a motion, seconded by Peter Klose, to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 pm. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Bethany Hicks

Bethany Hicks