

Town Hall Meeting Room & Zoom Virtual Meeting Platform
Municipal Building
Minden Street, Greenville, Maine 04441
Minutes
September 6, 2023

NOTE TO PUBLIC: There is a video recording of this Planning Board meeting available on the Town website: <https://greenvilleme.com/boards/planning-board-meeting-video/>. The video recording is the official record of the Planning Board meeting. These Minutes reflect specific actions taken by the Planning Board (the “Board”) at the meeting and identify the discussions at the meeting.

Meeting called to order at: 5:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Contreni, Chair, Lurline Arco, Secretary, Noel Wohlforth, Maureen Hopkins, Brent Ireland (Alt. 1), Vacant (Alt. 2)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

MEMBERS VIA ZOOM: David Case

ALSO PRESENT: Mike Roy (Town Manager)
Ronald Sarol (Code Enforcement Officer)

GUESTS: Jonathan Boynton, Burt Whitman, Steve Mason

GUESTS VIA ZOOM: Carl Chretien

Conflict of Interest with any agenda item by Board members: None

Minutes: August 16, 2023

Motion Made By: Noel moved to accept the August 16, 2023 Minutes

Seconded by: Maureen

Motion passed/failed: Passed 5-0 via roll-call

Additions or Deletions: Maureen asked to add the Planning Board By-Law Provisions. John said he will put the request under New Business but only if we have time.

Report from CEO: Ron reported on the period from 8/17/23-9/5/23. Ron continues to work on assigning 911 addresses to new properties and updating existing properties using the State’s Geolynx Server. Ron also continues to check the status of permits that are soon to expire to verify their progress. Ron continues to deal with the property dispute issue on Lily Bay Road. Also, property line setback checks. There were 8 new permits issued for a total of 127 for the year. John asked what Ron finds when he checks on the status of permits. Ron said most of the permits are

completed and he marks off as done. The ones that have not been started and are about to expire, Ron informs them that they must reapply for the permit. The rule is that they must have completed approximately 30% of the work. Maureen asked about the boundary dispute and if anyone would be coming to the Planning Board. Ron said that one of the residents asked to be put on the September 20, 2023, Agenda. They want to know if what is being erected is considered a fence. Mike asked how many vendors are expected for Fly-In. Ron said Telford is expecting approximately 25 and Dale Goodwin approximately 60.

Action Items: None

Old Business: None

New Business: Short-Term Rental (“STR”) discussion with Jonathan. John said he contacted Jonathan back in July when he saw his name in the Bangor Daily News regarding STR in the City of Belfast. Jonathan is the City Planner for Belfast. Jonathan was also a member of the Planning Board and is a resident of Greenville. Jonathan said he has been with the City of Belfast for 4 years. The topic of STR periodically comes up for discussion. Jonathan said it’s not just Belfast or Greenville, but the State is also looking into STR. Some people say it is the worst thing while others say it is how they make their mortgage payments. Houses for sale in the \$100,000-\$200,000 in the State are non-existent which is why STR are so high. Johnathan provided the Board with a copy of the Proposed Ordinance Amendment Short Term Rental Registry presented to Belfast on August 15, 2023. 95% of the Amendment was accepted. Jonathan referred to his January 5th memo to the Belfast Planning Board. The analysis was for Belfast but he also looked at Greenville. The vacancy rate in Greenville is 50% but that does not mean the houses are abandoned. It means they are not lived in all year. Jonathan spoke to people from the State and local and a healthy percentage is 90% year-round occupancy. He does not see that happening in Greenville since the people who do live here have camps on Moosehead Lake or Wilson Pond. People see what is happening in Greenville and see the investment opportunity. The January 5th memo to the Belfast Planning Board notes that the highest percentage of the population is 65+ years of age (35.6%) and the poverty rate is 36% for 18 years of age and under. You need to consider that some people who are long-term residents have property that is now quite valuable, and they have STR to pay their taxes. Then there are residents with children that are struggling to get by since the pay scale isn’t very high. Also noted that the STR should be looked at as commercial. But then, many of these STR are in residential neighborhoods. Data provided for STR for Greenville is incorrect since it includes Beaver Cover, Lily Bay and Kokadjo. What you really need is hard data before any decisions can be made. An Ordinance allows you to set registration fees and give the planning code officer a place to start.

Brent asked if there was anything in place where a landlord of a STR is asked to police his renters, i.e., sleeps 6 but there are 12, trash, noise late at night. Jonathan – if breaking noise ordinance it is a public nuisance it is a police action. That is one of the reasons for the registration, so we know who to call. If you leave a message with an Air-BnB, you don’t know who you are calling or where. Carl wanted to know if these places were being inspected. Jonathan could only answer for Belfast and no they aren’t. Carl said anyone who purchases a home needs to install smoke

detectors within 30 days of purchase. Greenville has only one full time fireman and the rest are volunteers. Response time is 18 minutes. A population over 4,000 must be inspected. A population of 2,000-4,000, homeowners must hire a fire inspector.

Maureen asked were there any objections when presented to the Belfast Board. Jonathan said it was presented over approximately 6 meetings and there was a meeting involving the public. It was done over time. John asked how many people attended these public hearings. Jonathan about 30. Mike – how do you plan on getting the word out. Jonathan – took advice from Greenville and will be putting the notices in the tax bills. Ron asked how they were handling the private septic systems. Jonathan says the STR can advertise sleeps 24 if in fact it only sleeps 6. If this continues say every three days, the system can explode and cause an environmental issue. Maureen – what is the level of effort for the Town and personnel to enforce the ordinance and is there a legal budget in case of a lawsuit. Mike – currently no. Maybe going forward but not in the budget. Jonathan said it is self-compliant. It will get expensive when you have asked a few times to register, they don't comply, and then you need to apply hard enforcement.

Steve asked where Jonathan got his information. Jonathan said he looked at the Census and Maine State Housing Authority. They have a lot of data on the cost of housing in the State. The average cost of a 2-bedroom in Belfast last year was \$1,200/month and is sure it is significantly higher now. Steve said he has a STR which is open from Memorial Day to Columbus Day. For those that don't comply, how do you get the data which needs to be factual. Jonathan – that is why I wanted the registration. If you go to Air DNA, they compile their data from Air BnB and whoever else is out there, for marketing purposes. They don't provide an address, just a general idea of the area. Steve said before you go forward with a plan, he would like to see hard facts and only include Greenville. John – we are only focusing on Greenville.

John – the registration is \$50 and if you do not comply by a certain date, it's \$100. Where do these funds go? Jonathan – into the general fund. Can these funds be dedicated to enforcement? Jonathan – we don't use the funds for that. We found over the past 10 years that Bed and Breakfasts have declined. If you dedicate the funds towards a salary, you could be on shaky ground. Noel – before coming up with a concrete plan, we need to identify where the STR are. Jonathan – it will take time and money to find exact addresses. John – the Belfast Select Board approved 95% of the proposed ordinance. Jonathan – yes, but there are a couple of changes.

Brent – went on Air DNA to find out who has a STR and where located. He was blocked and told he needed to make an appointment with their broker in order to get names and addresses. Jonathan – you should have that information because we need to send out tax bills. Mike – 75% of Greenville's tax bills go out of state. Steve – concerned about how they will be taxed. Jonathan – the assessors take care of taxing and go by State guidelines. Only looking to see if covered by the Homestead Exemption. Carl – there is a big issue with affordable housing in Greenville and STR are adding to that. If the steam plant goes back online, we will need housing for that. Mike – if the annual registration fee is \$50, you have 160 STR, that's \$8,000/yr., what are you hoping to gain. Jonathan – the goal is not to deter STR but to gather information to see if it is an issue. Mike – this is not a revenue generator, so what is the goal for Greenville, affordable housing?

Jonathan – affordable housing. It’s people like myself, teachers, police officers who make a decent living but not outrageous. These are the folks that are excluded. Last year in Greenville, you could not find a house for under \$300,000. Maureen – back in May, the Select Board had a meeting and Destination Moosehead said that every hotel was booked through the summer. There are a couple of STR on her road and they are always booked. Understands it brings people to the Town and they spend money. Believes it is a necessary evil. Mike – if we had more hotel rentals, would that diminish STR a bit? Noel – unintended consequence is we are going to lose the school. No one with kids will move here. Even if there are people willing to move here, there is less housing. All I really want to know is where STR are located. John – agreeing with Steve, we need facts. Some people he spoke with complain bitterly while others say it pays my taxes. Jonathan – 50% of housing in Greenville is considered vacant, with vacant meaning you can move in tomorrow. Jonathan – STR subsidizes us living here. 75% of the tax bills are going out of Greenville, but we are importing those taxes to operate the Town. Jonathan – I am in favor of tourism, but you can have too much. You don’t want to be Bar Harbor. Noel – the school is one of the largest employers in the Town. If you lose the school, you lose jobs. John – when you did your research, did you know who was an individual vs. an investor? Jonathan – no but will be looking into that. John thanked Jonathan for attending and providing very helpful information. Jonathan said he would be willing to come back.

Items for Next Meeting: Discussion of Planning Board By-Laws changing the quorum from 4 to 3.

What’s on your mind: Passed

Adjournment: Noel motioned to adjourn at 6:12. Brent seconds. Passed 5-0 via roll-call