

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Monday October 12, 2023

Finance Committee

11 in attendance

Dennis Crowley (Chair)	Josette Burke
Douglas Shea (Vice Chair)	Susan Lawson
Mark Trudell	Steve Hendricks
Lisa Van der Linden	Scott Wassel
Lawrence Pitman	Jean Kenney
Audrey Grace	

Absent: Kathleen Foley Greulich, Mark Sullivan

Additional attendees:

Jim Johnson, Patrick Shield, Jodi Cuneo, Jim Crowley, Patrick Deschenes

Meeting minutes of recorded meetings include time stamps from the video for viewing actual content.

The video can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4snKcW-QJuc&list=WL&index=4>

Approval of minutes is based on the printed word and not the video

The meeting was called to order by Dennis Crowley at 7:00pm.

Article 17

Jim Johnson explained the Citizen's Petition would like to refer the petition back, and the Planning Board voted to refer back.

Motion by Mark Trudell to reconsider Article 17, Seconded by Susan. Motion Passed 9-0-0.

The Committee had no further discussion.

Motion by Mark Trudell to refer Article back to the Petitioner, Seconded by Susan Lawson. Motion Passed 9-0-0.

Article 16

Lisa Van der Linden joined the meeting.

Motion by Mark Trudell to reconsider Article 16, Seconded by Susan Lawson. Motion Passed 9-0-1. Lisa Van der Linden abstained.

Jack Conroy, Planning Board Chair, discussed why the board voted not to recommend the article. The Board feels that it is a controlled two-family, and it is a separate unit from the original home, not actually an in-law apartment. They also took issue with the lack of need for Special Permit, as the Planning Board felt that there should be additional opportunity for neighbors to share concerns through a Special Permit process. They also had an issue with the ability to rent the unit. He also pointed out that there is no requirement for the property owner to occupy one of the units.

Jean Kenney joined the meeting.

Commented [DC1]: From Lisa: I checked with Pat Deschenes and he responded that the bylaw DOES require the owner to reside in the home. Here is Pat's clarification: "Not only is the property owner required to live at the property as their primary dwelling, but as stated within the bylaw they will be required to submit a notarized letter attesting to that fact. That documentation is required before a building permit can be issued and will then be recorded as part of the "Notice of ADU" at the registry of deeds. Proof of that recorded "Notice of ADU" is required to be submitted to the Building Department before a certificate of occupancy can be issued for the ADU."

Josette Burke understands the long list of objections, and wanted clarification if these were the reasons that the vote was struck down, and Jack Conroy agreed, and further explained that he also presented additional comments based on research.

Susan Lawson asked for clarification on the age restriction, and Jack Conroy explained that you either need to be a relative to the owner or be 55 years or older.

Larry Pitman asked who brought the petition forward, and Jim Johnson explained that the Select Board brought it forward in order to increase the housing in Walpole and make it more affordable.

Lisa Van der Linden asked how many ADUs are requested per year, and Patrick Deschenes explained that the average is 6 per year, and that there have been 43 units since the 2017 bylaw was put in place. Lisa Van der Linden doesn't feel like this is a major issue, and feels like the Town shouldn't make it more difficult for a family member to find housing. Patrick Deschenes explained that the Town has worked hard to find a middle-ground to provide provisions for these ADUs. Walpole's provision keeps the in-law option, as well as allowing an individual over 55 years old to also live in the dwelling unit. Lisa Van der Linden asked if the 55-year-old allowance is a way to allow older residents to find more affordable places to live independently, and Patrick Deschenes agreed.

Motion by Mark Trudell to open the public hearing, seconded by Susan Lawson. Motion Passed 11-0-0.

Audrey Grace commented on the work the Select Board, Patrick Deschenes and Jim Crowley have done to construct the bylaw.

Susan Lawson commented that she also appreciates the bylaw, and the changes it would allow for older residents who would like to stay in Walpole.

Phil Czachorowski, member of the Planning Board, wanted to share that he was the only member of the board who voted yes to the changes. He expressed concerns regarding the State's housing plan, and that this change would improve Walpole in that regard. He specifically appreciates that elderly residents could rent their dwelling unit, or possibly allow a family member to move into the dwelling unit. He also pointed out that it is governed by existing bylaws, to protect the size and location of these dwelling units. He feels that there is no need to make this process burdensome, especially considering the existing housing crisis.

Mark Trudell asked for clarification as to who could occupy the dwelling unit and the house. Jim Crowley explained that he could move into the dwelling unit and allow his grown children to occupy the home because of the kinship element.

Josette Burke asked if with the bylaw change, would there be notification to abutters, and Jim Crowley said no because it would be allowed by right.

Jack Conroy added that you are not allowed to build a dwelling unit if you live in an existing multifamily.

Public comment was made by Ron Ardine, who suggested that the Finance Committee be mentioned by name in their packets, so that folks can recognize the work the members put in, as well as make them available to contact for questions.

Public Comment was made by Sarah Khatib regarding Article 13, regarding the date change of elections. She appreciates the goal of increasing the voter turnout. She shared concern with research that went into the proposal, as well as the solution to move it from a Saturday to a Tuesday.

Many of the Committee Members explained that the current date conflicts with a multitude of Town events, and that it has become challenging to get staff for these elections on a Saturday.

Members briefly discussed the language used for particular bylaws, and that it would be presented that way at Town Meeting. Jim Johnson agreed.

Adjournment

Motion by Mark Trudell and seconded by Josette Burke to adjourn.
The motion passed 11-0-0.

The Finance Committee adjourned.