

WARREN TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
7:30 P.M. – Susie B. Boyce Meeting Room – 44 Mountain Boulevard
February 24, 2025
APPROVED

CALL TO ORDER

FLAG SALUTE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR TROOPS

Mr. Linder introduced Mr. Erich Dong who was present and is a junior member appointed by the Mayor. Emma Szousa is also a junior member. Mr. Lindner spoke about the Historic Sites Committee and they have had docents give tours and some have been younger and one is now a Historic Sites member.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Lontai

Committeeman Blick

Mr. Lindner

Mr. Gallic

Mr. DiBianca (excused)

Mr. Argiro

Mr. Puglisi

Mr. Scuderi

Mr. Esposito excused)

Mr. Lippitt

Mr. Dealaman (excused)

Statement by Presiding Officer: Adequate notice of this meeting was posted on January 13, 2025, the Township bulletin board and sent to the Township Clerk, Echo Sentinel, and Courier News per the Open Public Meetings Act. All Board members are duly appointed volunteers working for the good and welfare of Warren Township. We plan to adjourn no later than 10:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

November 25, 2024 and January 6, 2025

Motion was made by Mr. Gallic, seconded by Mr. Argiro to approve the November 25, 2024 minutes.

ROLL CALL

For: Mr. Lindner, Mr. Argiro, Mr. Puglisi, Mr. Scuderi, Mr. Gallic, and Mr. Lippitt.

Motion was made to approve the January 6, 2025 minutes by Mr. Gallic, seconded by Mr. Argiro.

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ROLL CALL

For: Committeeman Blick, Mr. Argiro, Mr. Puglisi, Mr. Scuderi, Mr. Gallic, and Mr. Lippitt.

Reports:

Steve Warner, Esq.
John T. Chadwick, IV, P.P., Professional Planner
Christian Kastrud, P.E., Professional Engineer
Maryellen Vautin, Clerk

CITIZENS HEARING non-agenda items

Ms. Shelley Molnar from 3 Stoningham Drive came forward and asked about the Master Plan survey and information. The Master Plan survey will be discussed at the end of the meeting.

RESOLUTIONS

PB24-05 Dealaman Broadway
Block 52 lots 21.02, 21.01
Preliminary and Final Subdivision

Motion was made by Mr. Gallic, seconded by Mr. Lippitt to adopt the resolution.

ROLL CALL

For: Mr. Lindner, Mr. Argiro, Mr. Puglisi, Mr. Scuderi, Mr. Gallic, and Mr. Lippitt

PB 23-02 Ana Santos
Block 202, Lots 19 & 4
Extension of Time for Minor Subdivision

Mr. Flynn had a letter from the applicant's attorney and there were delays with the County approval.

Motion was made by Mr. Argiro, seconded by Mr. Lippitt

ROLL CALL

For: Mayor Lontai, Committeeman Blick, Mr. Lindner, Mr. Argiro, Mr. Puglisi, Mr. Scuderi, and Mr. Lippitt.
Abstain: Mr. Gallic

HEARING/agenda items

PB24-06 Patricia Pereira Martins
Block 37 lot 6.01
Minor Subdivision

Mr. Rob Simon with Herald Law came forward for the applicant. He represents the applicant. The property is in the R-65, 1.5 acre property. Block 37, lot 6.01, 209 Mountain View Road. The current lot is approximately 126,000SF with an existing two story single family dwelling, and some other improvements. A minor subdivision is proposed to two residential lots. Lot 6.03 is proposed at 60, 866SF, and proposed lot 6.04 containing 65,369 SF, where the minimal lot size is 65, 340SF. The bulk variance relief requested is for one of the two lots which is deficient by less than 7% of what is required. The surrounding neighborhood within the R-65 zone contain a number of undersized lots, many less than a half acre in size.

There will be two witnesses, Mr. Craig Stires, the applicant's engineer, and Ms. Donna Holmqvist, the applicant's planner. The witness for the applicant and the township professionals, Mr. John Chadwick, the Township Planner, and Mr. Christian Kastrud, the Township Engineer were sworn in.

Mr. Stires gave his credentials and was accepted by the board. Mr. Stires is familiar with the property and surrounding area, and prepared the plans. Mr. Stires brought in Exhibit A-1, an aerial of the site, dated 3/10/23. He went over the plans with Mountain View Road and showed the subject property and surrounding lots. There are existing dwellings. It shows the proposed subdivision line.

The lot to the east that will contain the existing house (proposed lot 6.04) is 65,369Sf. Proposed lot 6.03 is 60,866 short about 4800SF. All other items comply. There are two lots to the east that do not comply with lot size required. The lot to the west is approximately two acres plus and does comply, but the next one over does not comply. Some lots on the south side are also smaller than required. Mr. Stires felt there is plenty of room to develop the lots with dwellings.

The corporate center does abut the property and is a different zone. They went over the township reports (fire and police had no issues). Mr. Kastrud's review letter dated January 19, 2025 was reviewed. The applicant agreed to the comments. Some structures are proposed to be removed to keep the 25 ft setback.

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The health department memo spoke about public water and septic and the lots can meet the requirements for that.

Mr. Chadwick talked about the zoning table and the applicant is planning on recording the subdivision by deed. They discussed if there are any wetlands on the property. Mr. Ed Kuc, from Eastern States walked the site and he did not see any on the property. There is some to the east but the buffer would not be within the subject property. The applicant can get a letter from Mr. Kuc on this subject.

Mr. Lindner asked about a proposed driveway and if there are any issues with site distance for entering on to the roadway. Mr. Stires did not believe there are any issues. Mr. Lindner mentioned the lot width and it is measured at the setback and it is 153 ft. and meets standards, and they can note that on the plans.

Mr. Gallic asked if the applicant had reached out to neighboring properties to purchase any of their property to meet requirements. Mr. Simon said they did.

Ms. Donna Holmqvist came forward as applicant's planner. She has not testified before Warren's board but has been before Bernards and Somerville boards. She is CEO and founder of her own firm, Preferred Planning Group, LLC. She gave her credentials and was accepted by the board.

Ms. Holmqvist brought in Exhibit A-2, a small aerial image from October 25, 2024 by Nearmap. They want to establish the area of impact (within the green lines). Opposite of the property is the farm and a different zone and most of it is in the CR130/65 zone (3 acre zone). The aerial shows the Warren Corporate Center at about 175 acres.

She feels it is a better alternative to have one lot a little short and the other fully conforming. They could split the lots and each lot would be nonconforming /short by about 2000SF. They present to the board with one fully conforming lot and another that is short by about 4400SF but conforms in every other aspect.

She did look through the Master Plan for the intent of the R-65 zoning. Much of the R-65 area is fully developed and there is some concern with creating nonconforming lots. The township has emphasis on environmental considerations and conservation easements to preserve sensitive environmental resources. The Master Plan talks about a density of 1.5 acres for the R-65 zone. Ms. Holmqvist feels this is a very small deviation, it is just a little short of the required size. The lot width is important and these meet the width and keeps with the neighborhood and there is wooded space behind the lot. This area is conducive to adding another housing unit on the proposed lot. The property is close to I78, just a little bit north on King George Road. Mountain View Road is a major east-west connecting roadway. The property is opposite major farmland, about 30 acres.

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The lots have a large building area and are under the building coverage and impervious coverage for the proposed lots. It is reasonable as proposed.

Exhibit A-2 has purple circles showing the lots that don't meet the minimum lot area required. It is about 60% of the lots that don't meet the required lot size. She felt there is no detrimental impact to the area.

Mr. Simon asked about the possibility of purchasing land from neighboring properties to gain conformity. The owner did reach out to neighboring property previously to help out with an easement for a sewer line. The neighbor was not interested. Ms. Holmqvist pointed to two purposes of the land use law that their application advances. Subsection (c), providing light, air, and open space for consideration as they have less than the maximum impervious and building coverage, and ample setbacks. The other purpose of planning advanced is subsection (i), promoting a desirable visual environment by virtue of having a large building envelope. The front yard setbacks are large.

They request the lot area variance per the c2 criteria of the Municipal Land Use Law and the criteria for granting the variance has to do with the benefits outweighing the detriments, and that it advances of at least one public purpose of the land use law. They are opposite an extensive farm property.

The negative criteria is used to prove that the variance can be granted with no substantial detriment to the public good and no substantial impairment of the zone plan and zoning ordinance. The average lot area in the surrounding land is 1.1 acres and there are several about that size. Their proposal exceeds that. Thus no detrimental impact. It is a developed area and relatively close to I78 and that also supports an additional residential lot. Mr. Simon mentioned the Couchman case that demonstrates that the proposal demonstrates a better zoning alternative for the property given the area. There are some estate like homes near and there are also new townhouses and apartments in town so it speaks to the high demand for housing in Warren.

Mr. Chadwick commented that the lot to the left is one of the lots of the bus repair lot and had a variance to continue that use and there is no land available. Mr. Gallic asked about the neighboring properties and no one was interested in selling. Mr. Gallic does not agree that the lots proposed are regular or ordinary in terms of the shape. He also feels it is not diminimus. Mr. Gallic did not agree that the proposal advances the Master Plan as it is a higher density than the Master Plan calls for.

Mr. Blick asked about the variance and what the precise numbers are for the lots square feet. The one lot is under the required lot size by 4,474SF.

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Mr. Lindner went over the application and a variance for one lot. If both lots were conforming that would be permitted to subdivide. Did the applicant prove that this is a benefit to the community? The lot shape is unorthodox. Mr. Lindner also does not agree it is diminimus.

The hearing was opened to the public. Scott Dealaman came forward and was sworn in. He grew up in the house next to the proposed lot and have lived in town his whole life. The subdivision will put a house right next to them and will diminish quality of life. If the board does consider and grant this, he requests some additional set back to the adjoining property line with his property.

Mr. Simon asked for a few minutes to speak with the applicant. The applicant is willing to a condition of approval of an additional setback (it is shown at 50 ft currently) of 75 ft side yard on the west side.

Mr. Clint Dealaman came forward and was sworn in. He had a mulch business across from the subject property and the owners of the proposed subdivision property were a big factor in shutting it down. He then had a compost business after the mulch business was shut down. He felt harassed by the neighbors. He now has a flower garden and still feels hassled.

Mr. Simon went over the application with a c2 variance, a minor subdivision with one variance. He feels it is a better alternative for the property. The exhibits with the surrounding areas and show smaller lots nearby. And compared to those lots this is much closer to the required size. They have offered a larger side yard setback and ask the boards approval.

Mr. Gallic made a motion to deny the application, seconded by Mr. Lippitt.

ROLL CALL

For: Mayor Lontai, Committeeman Blick, Mr. Lindner, Mr. Argiro, Mr. Puglisi, Mr. Scuderi, Mr. Gallic, and Mr. Lippitt.

Against: None. Application denied.

Master Plan Committee Updates

Mr. Lindner said there is not real time line for a Master Plan. The board hopes to have it complete this summer or early fall. There will be a public meeting kickoff to inform residents on the Master Plan process. There will be maps and they will show open space, and affordable housing areas, and zoning. They propose 2 or 3 meetings dedicated to the Master Plan. There will be another meeting maybe

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when the process is 50 to 60% done and another one when plan is 80 to 90% done.

Mr. Lindner will ask for input from the Township Committees/Commissions for what they would like to see in the Master Plan or if there are concerns. He mentioned he would like a process for public to make comments via the Master Plan website

Mr. Gallic went over the survey, about 530 responses and 2/3 of them were complete and a third incomplete. He feels it was great feedback and we also got another 300 plus written responses. The total is 850 approximately. With that number of responses, he feels most of the public is fairly happy with the town. The surveys mostly have the same theme. He ran them through AI to gather the summary of the results coming back. The general answers for number 1 is preservation of open space. The next one, 2, controlling housing and development, the third one is traffic and infrastructure, revitalizing Town Center. There is also education and schools, which the board doesn't have much control over. The AI used was GROC 2. There were some mentions of supporting local business, environmental sustainability, public safety, affordable housing placement, and cultural and historic preservation.

Notes included cherishing rural charm, concerns on over-development, resistance to high density housing, and thoughtful planning. Everyone wants open space and no one wanted garden apartments. They went over some more of the results.

There were concerns on traffic, high density housing; noise and light pollution had some interesting answers and during the week residents want things shut down by 10 p.m., but the weekend it was more 11p.m.to midnight. The results are not complete.

Most of the responses for location of affordable housing was close to Route 78. There were some concerns about run off (stormwater).

It was decided that a Master Plan meeting could be March 31 at 730 p.m.. There was a push at the end to get people to complete the survey and Mr. Lindner felt some were very complete.

Mr. Chadwick asked about the Preservation Plan and Historic Element and it has been sent out to the board. It was comprehensive and concise. Mr. Chadwick suggests to put it on for a public hearing.

There is also a (new) Green Element and Environmental Plan that has been started.

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Mr. Chadwick spoke about the Township Committee passing a resolution to propose the Township's affordable housing obligation. It started out at 273 and the town reduced it to 182. Objectors have to be submitted by the end of the week. There is a process to appeal the objections. The plan is to be done by July 1st as to how to meet the obligation, The Affordable Housing Element. Mr. Chadwick believe that date may push back as there will be so many municipalities submitting the Elements. There is some debate on the affordable housing extensions for the apartments across from town hall and previously they received two points per unit but this time they had it for one point for unit. There are some credits that are left from the third round the town wants to include.

Mr. Lindner opened to the public. Mr. David Green from 45 Sycamore Way came forward. He hopes the 183 number stays or gets better. He asked about the Wagner Farm development that has been on hold. The applicant has not formally withdrawn and the number stays in place. The Township requirement is to make the affordable housing available but they are not required to build it.

Mr. Bill Gilbert came forward and asked about the Preservation Plan and if it is available. It will be put on the website. He also asked about objectors to the affordable housing number and it is done via DCA website. He also asked about the affordable housing planner that was hired and how that planner will work with the Master Plan. Mayor Lontai said she was only hired for Affordable Housing currently.

Ms. Molnar came forward and was delighted that the community is involved and there will be a meeting for the Master Plan. She asked if the Master Plan meetings will be recorded and broadcast. Mr. Lindner did not know.

Mr. Joe Farro asked about the 183 number and that it could be challenged.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING

March 10, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made to adjourn. All in favor. Meeting adjourned approximately 9:20.