

STILLWATER TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
February 2, 2016
Special Meeting
6:00 p.m.

OPENING STATEMENT: Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided according to the Open Public Meetings Act, Assembly Bill 1030. Notice of this meeting was sent to the press on January 28, 2016 and was placed on the Official Bulletin Board at the Municipal Building.

Roll Call was taken and the flag was saluted.

PRESENT: Committeewoman Chammings, Committeeman Gross, Committeeman Morrison, Deputy Mayor Scott, Mayor Fisher, Municipal Clerk Lynda Knott, Township Attorney Richard Stein.

A Special Meeting was held in conjunction with the Stillwater Township Planning Board and the Stillwater Township Zoning Board of Adjustment to discuss the possible formation of a Land Use Board.

Roll Call was taken by Zoning Board Chairman Powell.

PRESENT: Mrs. Draghi, Mr. Wykoff, Mr. Lippencott, Mr. Stachura, Mr. Powell

A quorum of the Planning Board was not present. Arlene Fisher, Zoning Officer and Alfia Schemm, Planning and Zoning Board Secretary were also present.

Mayor Fisher explained the reasoning a Land Use Board is being considered; the lack of meetings and business for the boards during the past year, and as a cost savings. Mr. Powell noted the Zoning Board utilizes its professionals on an as needed basis so as not to incur charges and he felt savings would not be significant. He felt a land use board would have to meet twice per month once business starts to increase. He asked if it was just a budgetary consideration or if there was an issue with certain decisions made by the Zoning Board. Mayor Fisher indicated that was not the case. He noted there is a large percentage of open space in the township and development will be limited into the future.

Mrs. Fisher has been a past member of the Zoning Board and is currently a member of the Planning Board. She expressed concern with the steady decline in zoning and planning applications; as well as approved subdivisions that have never been constructed. The economy is slow and residents do not want to spend the money. She felt this was the best time to make a land use board work and if it is not successful, it can revert back to two boards. A land use board has been formed in Stanhope and is doing well.

Mrs. Draghi stated the Zoning Board is made up of residents without political affiliation and the Planning Board has Committee members and the Zoning Officer serving as members. She felt if the combined board does not work and it has to revert back to two boards it would be difficult to get volunteers. She expressed concern at the lack of Planning Board members in attendance. Mrs. Draghi felt development could increase at any time. The members of the Zoning Board are dedicated, qualified individuals and if she had not attended a Township Committee meeting, no one on the board would have known that a land use board was being considered. She expressed concern with the Chairman not being informed.

Mr. Morrison questioned how a Zoning Board affects the Planning Board functionally. He was also concerned that no Planning Board members were present. Mrs. Fisher stated only Planning Board member Mr. Donofrio commented at the last meeting, indicating he was in favor of a combined board due to the decrease in business. Mrs. Fisher stated there is no political interference and Committee members must step down on a use variance because if it is denied it can be appealed to the Township Committee.

Ms. Chammings informed those present that she had heard from a Planning Board member and it appeared there was a miscommunication as to the time the meeting was to be held, which could explain the lack of attendance. Mr. Scott liked having two boards and more community members involved in the township but development has slowed. He stated the purpose of this meeting was to allow all members to provide their input and as a fact finding effort.

Mr. Powell and Mrs. Draghi questioned if the Zoning Officer would also have to step down on a use variance application since she is the person who reviews it and provides a report. Mr. Stein indicated that would be a determination to be made by the Board Attorney at the time; by statute only Class I and Class III members must step down. Mrs. Fisher indicated she did not have an issue with resigning from the Planning Board to resolve the issue.

Dave Emmons, Planning Board Chairman, arrived at 6:22 p.m. and a quorum of the Planning Board was present. A roll call was taken by Chairman Emmons.

PRESENT: Mr. Emmons, yes, Mrs. Fisher, yes, Mr. Scott, yes, Ms. Chamblings, yes

Mr. Stachura asked if a budgetary analysis was completed and if a savings amount was determined. Mayor Fisher indicated the savings would be the total of the attorney, engineering, and secretarial fees. Mr. Powell stated there would be no cost savings for the attorney or engineer as they do not attend or incur charges if there are no applications. He recommended comparing the budget for the last two years, find out how much money was spent that did not need to be and determine the savings if a land use board is formed.

Mrs. Fisher stated the Planning Board Engineer and Secretary have indicated the application fees need to be increased to cover meeting expenses and she felt if this is done it will deter individuals from applying. The fact that the fees need to be increased to cover costs shows there is a need to combine the boards.

Mrs. Draghi asked if Mrs. Fisher is compensated for serving on the Planning Board. Mrs. Fisher stated she is not. Mr. Emmons stated from a Planning Board standpoint, professionals are needed at every meeting so there would be no cost savings.

Ms. Chamblings was not in favor of a land use board as she felt it would not be in the best interest of the town. Mr. Gross stated the Zoning Board members are qualified professionals and very fair. He also was not in favor of land use board.

Mr. Morrison asked if there was baseline work that the secretary still has to do when there is no meeting. Mr. Powell was uncertain.

At this point, Mr. Powell opened the Zoning Board meeting to the public at 6:38 p.m. There being no one from the public wishing to speak, this portion of the meeting was closed at 6:38 p.m.

Mrs. Draghi made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Stachura. In a voice vote, all were in favor.

At this point, Mr. Emmons opened the Planning Board meeting to the public at 6:39 p.m. There being no one from the public wishing to speak, this portion of the meeting was closed at 6:39 p.m.

Mr. Scott made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mrs. Fisher. In a voice vote, all were in favor.

Mayor Fisher thanked all for their participation.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wunder