

Planning Board

Minutes of Meeting 9/25/2024

Attendees: Members Jim Brodeur, Emily Yazwinski, Sarah Bartholomew, Liz Kidder, Dave Curtis, Devorah Vester

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:45 PM by Chairman Brodeur.

Review of minutes: Emily made a motion to accept minutes from 9/11/24/24, Liz seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Correspondence:

1. 9 Pine St., Greenfield – Zoning Board of Appeals - special permit to allow a 20% reduction in front yard setback for expansion of an existing porch.
2. 238 Revere Circle, Greenfield - Zoning Board of Appeals – a special permit to allow a kennel to keep 5 dogs as pets.

Continue discussion to update Zoning bylaws with respect to housing and the MA Affordable Housing Act, including how to separate articles for majority and super-majority voting requirements.

Public hearing for the application of Movement Retreat Center for a special permit to operate a retreat at 63 North County Rd.

Hearing opened at 7:00 pm by Chairman Brodeur. Application for special permit read aloud.

Attendees: Jen Kiok - Movement Retreat Center, Miriam Gee – 63 N. County Rd., Carol Kuzdeba – 40 Simon Keets Rd., Beth Kuzdeba – 60 Simon Keets Rd., Warren Facey and Lisa Moon – 184 North County Rd.

Applicant Jen Kiok and Miriam Gee presented information on the Bent Birch Retreat Center. The legal name is Movement Retreat Center, and they're applying for non profit status using this legal name. They currently have a fiscal sponsor to ensure the Movement Retreat Center is in compliance with being a non profit while they work to get the non profit status. They are a registered charity with the state, but had not yet made financial disclosures, and they're applying for federal non-profit status. (501 C3).

- Discussion of existing tax break with having some land in conservation, and some of the impact of non profit status and not participating in paying taxes to the town;
- Mission statement – to provide a healing sanctuary for people working to make the world a better place, offering a space to reconnect with nature, each other, and themselves;
- Lawrence Barriner II, Jen Kiok, Maanav Thakore, Eli Feghali, Rachel Plattus are the stewardship team. Miriam Gee (architect) is assisting managing the process;
- Statistics: 16 parking spaces. 15-20 people or BOH limitations for septic. 13 of the 19 acres are part of the Mount Grace Community Land Trust. Contractor is hired to do repairs;
- Limitation of 10 full weeks of 25 people or less and unlimited weekends. Backing into North County Rd. prohibited. Porta potties and other sanitary equipment would be rented

- for event capacities above what the septic system can handle. Some events will have more than 25 people; discussion of potential cost of emergency services for that number of people. Discussion of possible payment of taxes or payment in lieu of taxes;
- Past activities were out of compliance with BOH. Proposed activities retreats, fundraisers and meetings, venue rental for workshops;
 - Board of Health updates discussed – code analysis for compliance, application submitted to FRCOG. Repair schedule reviewed. Their plan is to reopen in summer 2025 pending BOH compliance approval and special permit granted. Kitchen is not a commercial kitchen; food prepared there cannot be served to the public. Outside vendors or caterers need to be in BOH compliance but can serve food. Intent is to hire a property manager who doesn't live on site;
 - Discussion of what the Planning Board may want to outline in the special permit;
 - Possibility of a request for a zoom meeting with Randy Crozier at FRCOG and the Movement Center;
 - Proposed site visit prior to the meeting on Oct. 9 at 5 pm.

Public comments:

- Resident Beth Kuzdeba raised concern about a lack of transparency re: who the “point people” are for the Center and a lack of clear communication between the Center and the BOH. Jen Kiok spoke to the learning curve about being in compliance. Eli Feghali will be the full time coordinator for the project starting in October.
- Resident Carol Kuzdeba asked how they chose this particular property. Jen Kiok outlined a long process of searching for a property that was right for them in the area.

Motion to continue the hearing on Oct. 9th by Liz, seconded by Emily.

Motion to reconvene the Planning Board meeting by Liz, seconded by Emily at 8:30 pm.

Regular meeting opened for continued discussion of the MA Affordable Housing Act and re-review of our housing and ADU bylaws.

Next Meeting: extend public hearing to Oct. 9 at 7 with a potential site visit at 5 pm, seconded by Sarah and it passed unanimously. The Movement Center will confirm the site visit with the Planning Board.

A motion by Emily with a second by Liz to close the meeting, was voted unanimously in favor by all members present, at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah Bartholomew, Clerk