

Sandisfield, Ma 2nd Community Outreach Night Friday October 21, 2022

Friday, November 4, 22

Sandisfield, MA 2nd Community Outreach Night

7 PM

Old Town Hall, Sandisfield, MA 01255

Community Outreach Night

Hosted by the Sandisfield, MA Planning Board Committee and Sandisfield Selectman

- Planning Board Attendees
 - Barbara Cormier-Chairperson
 - Paul Adams
 - Lisa Leavenworth
 - Bill Taylor
 - Absent:
 - Paul Gaudette
- Selectman Attendees
 - Steve Seddon- Chairperson
 - Alex Bowman
 - John Field

Town Manager

Jonathan Sylbert

- Topics for discussion
 - Village Zoning
 - Business Zoning
 - Development

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- Camping

Discussion:

Barbara opened the community meeting at 7 PM.

She listed the topics of discussion and asked for people to be courteous to each other.

Barbara reported on Boards decision to put Dark Skies report in welcome packet.

First topic

Village zoning

Should we develop a town center?

Most people at the meeting concurred that -Yes we should have a town center.

Reasons given by various people were the following.

- 1) We need a place for people to congregate
- 2) A place for people to focus on.
- 3) Centralize town buildings- such as the post office, library, town hall and other town services. would be helpful
- 4) We need business and recreational development

Areas of suggestion for town center

- 1) Where new store is, new B&B in that area, there are areas available for possible development
- 2) The area where old town hall is now located was suggested
- 3) Question was raised “what makes a town center a center?”

Jonathan Sylbert, town manager used Monterey town center used as an example-can walk from one location to another-town hall, library, general store, church

- 4) Further exploration was the idea of community and how to create that.

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5) Suggestion was to poll all residents about where to place Center.

a) should it be localized to center of Sandisfield which would be at the Sandisfield Art Center?

b) less important of how many miles to town center than equal amount of time for each person. Given the expanse of Sandisfield another marker for how to determine where to develop would need to be agreed upon.

6) How many acres needed for a town center. Guesstimate was 20 acres

Most community members at the meeting want this issue to be worked on now.

Second topic

Business District Zoning

1) It was raised that there could be a change in frontage zoning from 200' to 100' to promote more small businesses.

2) Does the town own any property in the business district. No. couldn't be used for business if owned by town.

3) what is downside to changing footage
no apparent downside other than perhaps an increase in traffic

Jonathan Sylbert

limited amount of revenue-most from property taxes

question:

do you want to find other revenue sources

smaller lots make it more affordable

do you want more businesses

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using Egremont and Monterey as an example for increased revenue.

Jonathan suggested that a town center would enhance the character of the town from where it was and increase tax revenue.

Questions and remarks from community members:

1) Would a town center mean side walks, etc?

Yes, many federal dollars are spent on sidewalks-Canaan, Ct as an example

2) Would we have town water in the business district? Septic system and a well but probably not need town water..

3) Business Permit process is onerous at this time. Change it to accommodate business needs.

4) How many second home owners in Sandisfield pay what percentage of taxes. No one knew the answer. Turns out 50% are second homes.

5) Makes sense to not hold businesses to same home owner zone regulations.

6) Building in New Boston is mostly river front or ledges (difficult to build). There are conservation issues.

However, Monterey was able to get approval for river frontage building-library and general store given updated septic systems.

7) Certain landowners will benefit. Incentive will be dividing lots and selling them.

8) Industrial zone question. Are we talking about that also.

We don't allow anything by right at this time.

Suggestion made that we change the focus to mixed use district rather than just business district.

What do we want to allow.

9) Parking would be critical-town and business parking

Most community members want this topic to be worked on now.

Third Topic

Camping:

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Do we want a commercial camp grounds in Sandisfield?

We explored the definition of a commercial camp.

- 1) What is the definition of recreational camp-for children day or residential overnight wilderness
- 2) Seems to be vague zoning for RV campers.
- 3) recreational camping-do we want to allow more types of camping.
- 4) A suggestion was made that the camp grounds in Otis be used as a model
- 5) Issue of enforcement. Expand definition and glean from other areas.
- 6) Issue of sanitation was raised especially for tent camping. It seems other towns give special permits and that there are state laws. Needs further exploration.
- 7) Would a new bylaw would be needed for camping
- 8) Discussion on how to make camping happen. There are state laws, insurance requirements, etc
- 9) Small scale vs large scale.

Majority of community members wanted this issue to be worked on now.

Open up to discussion items not on agenda

Airbnb.

- 1) Wouldn't be part of community without airbnb
- 2) Limit amount of money due to distance from other areas.
- 3) Concern about town taxing.
- 4) Doing airbnb for survival.
- 5) Barbara Cormier says there will be a registration and tax.
- 6) Stress on services is the reason for the tax-although it was unclear if there are any statistics/reports indicating objective evidence to that reasoning.
- 7) How will the tax will be calculated?

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Jonathan Sylbert response was the burden of proof was on tax payers. They would have to prove why they shouldn't pay the tax. He used Monterey as an example claiming that STR charged high fees (his neighbor gets \$469 a night). It was reported by a local person that their Airbnb revenue was much lower this year and far less money than other towns due to distance from attractions that drew people to Berkshire county.

But Jonathan then made it clear he supported Airbnbs. Sees airbnb as a way to bring in new people to enjoy what we have to offer.

They bring in a different culture and use local merchants and businesses.

It was made clear that the Planning Board would consider the issue of how much tax to levy.

The next planning board meeting is November 1, 2022 and people were encouraged to attend.

Special town meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2022 to vote on new bylaws. One has to be in person to vote.

8) Want to keep ambience of Sandisfield not be a resort town.

Where people can live and raise their children.

9) STR not allowed in accessory dwellings. Use for long term rentals or family.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM