

Town of Constantia - Special Meeting

Meeting Minutes – February 16, 2023

A meeting was held for members of the Planning Board, Board of Appeals, and Code Enforcement Office to discuss policies and procedures regarding the Land Development Law (LDL) and Site Plan Reviews.

Attendees

- Frank Tomaino
- James Peck
- Ken Macari
- Patrick Dolan
- Ron Chapman
- Sandra Williams
- Warren Bader
- William Hamacher
- Rhonda Cottet
- Amy Connolly (Secretary)
- 3 Community Members

Call to Order

Supervisor Tomaino opened the meeting at 7:03pm.

Meeting requested by Code Enforcement Officer, Patrick Dolan to get on the same page with different boards within the town. Multiple properties in town do not have a site plan on file and this is causing issues. Mr. Dolan is curious about how familiar individuals are with the Land Development Law.

Mr. Macari spoke about how the LDL is created and adopted by the town.

Mr. Peck noted that the copy of the LDL distributed in the meeting states that it was revised in 2022 but has not seen it before. Planning Board has been using the 2020 version and is glad to have this new version.

Officials discuss what happens when a new business wants to open in Town. Step one for Site Plans is to go to the Code Enforcement Office. Discussion regarding who is responsible for this- business owner, property owner, or Code Enforcement.

Mr. Peck noted that there is a big problem with record keeping at Town Hall. How do we know what properties have a site plan? No central system is in place to identify where a file is held. Many older files are in “long term storage” and are not easily accessed.

Mr. Peck notes that there has been at least one instance of a business opening without any approval.

Mr. Dolan points out that businesses need to go through various inspections per NYS law and local laws, including fire inspection. Any business property should be in a separate file so that they can be easily accessed. One property in town has had three businesses without any site plans submitted or approved. We need to establish a firm foundation to make sure that every property is following the law. We need to establish the expectation that businesses are coming to the town.

Mr. Peck states that an electronic database would be very beneficial to the Town.

A community member asked if there a business license required? Recommends a no-fee business license to get people into the town hall.

Macari- However you find out, businesses are coming to the town, we need to know about it.

Chapman- How do we do this?

Heated exchange between Dolan and Chapman

Macari- What would make it easier? If we put this in the Land Development Law

Multiple officials agreed that individuals who are questioned often plead ignorance.

Individuals suggest a variety of solutions including, Town Website, newspaper notices, own's electronic sign, leaflet available at Town Hall.

Mr. Peck states that applications are in plain english in the town hall and on the website though they need some modification.

Mr. Chapman suggests that maybe we need to re-write the LDL so that it is readable by lay people.

Mr. Dolan states that people can interpret things differently and he would like to see consensus from the Town.

Mr. Peck asks about record keeping, do we have an electronic database already? Ms. Cottet states that the closest thing is Excel.

Frank- We have had lax code enforcement in the past. We need to get things updated. We have had many different CEOs over a short period of time.

Dolan- I would like to have one filing cabinet for businesses and another for subdivisions.

Mr. Dolan and Mr. Peck discuss a program called Williamson that is used by the Codes Office.

Mr. Peck talks about code enforcement and local laws planning department noted in LDL. Is there a record of what the duties for the COE and Planning Board Chair and who reports to who, that are accurate/updated? Would like to see people "cross trained" so that not one person is depended on for all of the relevant knowledge. Law mentions a Planning Director who is reported to by PB chair and COE. Needs to be addressed in some way.

Mr. Macari and Mr. Peck discuss Comprehensive Plan progress and history.

Macari- An old idea from previous Comprehensive plan and LDL updates that was not used was a page each dedicated to flowcharts for starting a business or construction a building. An index for LDL would be helpful

Mr. Hamacher thinks we should have a business registry in town hall. Updated annually. Dolan- give a grace period in which to register

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.

Amy Connolly

Secretary

Town of Constantia Planning & Appeals
Boards

Date of Approval