

Zoning Commission

MINUTES

Special Meeting and Public Hearing

February 5, 2018

7:30 p.m.

Main Level Meeting Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Averill, Mr. Reich,
Mr. Solley, Mr. Werkhoven (8:40 p.m.)

ALTERNATES ABSENT: Mrs. Lodsin, Ms. Radosevich, Mr. Sivick

STAFF PRESENT: Mrs. Hill

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Smith, Mr. Wright, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Weiner,
Mr./Mrs. Sarjeant, Mr. Lynch, Mr./Mrs. Solomon,
Mr. Williams, Mr. Larson, Mr. Szymanski, Members
of the Fire Department, Residents

Town of Washington/10 Blackville Road/Special Permit: Section
8.4.20/Fire Department Training Facility

Mr. Solley called the public hearing to order at 7:32 p.m. and seated Members Armstrong, Averill, Reich, and Solley. He then read the legal notice by Mrs. Hill published in Voices on 1/25/18 and 2/1/18.

Mr. Smith, Captain WVFD, presented the site plan, "Map Prepared for the Town of Washington," by Mr. Alex, dated January 2014 and revised 5/24/17 to show the fire training building and read the undated statement he submitted with the application.

Mr. Solley read Mrs. Hill's 2/5/18 administrative review and the questions raised in it were discussed. Mr. Smith stated at its highest point the proposed building would be 32 feet tall. Lot coverage was noted. Mr. Smith explained it was 19.2% and would not increase because the building would be erected on the existing storage site. Mr. Solley reviewed how the application complied with Sections 13.1.C.2 - 13.1.C.9 of the Regulations. To address concerns about compliance with Sections 13.1.C.5 and 13.1.C.8, Mr. Smith stated the proposed facility would be used approximately once a month on either Wednesday evenings or Sunday mornings from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. He noted both a drill and a training session would be held once a month, but not necessarily at this facility. He said the facility would be used mainly for Town volunteers, but also for training for towns that provide mutual aid to Washington. He said 5 to 25 people would use the facility at any one time. Regarding whether there was adequate parking on site for both staff and trainees, Mr. Smith stated that typically the volunteers would arrive in four fire

trucks and said there was adequate room on site for them to park. Mr. Solley asked how much smoke was anticipated during the drills. Mr. Smith noted that although the building will be vented, the Department will try to hold in as much smoke as possible when the hay bales and pallets are burned to create the necessary training environment. Alternately, a small smoke machine could be used. Mr. Averill asked if there would ever be a chemical fire. Mr. Smith stated only class A type materials could be burned; no chemical fires were allowed. He added there would be no fumes. Mr. Solley asked about the amount of noise at the drills. Mr. Smith said trucks would come and go, there would be noise from an occasional saw, and there would be no intercoms or bull horns.

The exterior renderings of the building were briefly reviewed. Mr. Smith stated a wall and a staircase had been added to the exterior since the plans had been presented to the Commission last year. He explained the building would be set on 4 ft. piers and would have a metal floor.

Mr. Solley read letters of support from Mr. and Mrs. Belanger and Mr. Barnet. It was noted Mr. Barnet had recommended the use of the facility be limited to the Washington Fire Dept. and occasional mutual aid towns. Mr. Smith said it was not the Dept's intent to rent out the facility; it would be for its own use and for mutual aid training.

Mr. Armstrong asked about the different types of training that might take place on site. Mr. Smith responded there would be repelling, rescue techniques, smoke drills, ladder drills, drills where holes would have to be sawed into the roof for ventilation, etc. When asked if there would be adequate water supply to put out a fire, he said the tank trucks hold 2500 gallons each, but it would take only 25 to 40 gallons to put out the fires within the building.

Mr. Lynch, adjoining property owner at 28 Blackville Road, objected to the non stop noise emanating from this property and objected to any increase that might result when the facility is used by the Fire Dept. He thought unreasonable noise would be created early on Sunday mornings and that his property value would be adversely impacted. He noted he had purchased his property because it was located next to Steep Rock and he had not anticipated the eventual noisy use of the property. Mr. Wright responded that the Fire Dept. would never purposely disturb him, but pointed out that Dept. training is necessary.

Mr. Larson, Steep Rock Assn., asked if there was a chance that sparks could be generated from fires within the facility.

Mr. Smith said the fires would be completely contained within the specially built fire room and there would be no chance for a spark to get out.

Mr. Armstrong asked again about what types of training would take place at the facility and what training techniques would be used. He said he was trying to assess the need for the facility. Mr. Smith said training would be given for extinguishing fires within buildings, water management, water and rope rescue, and other training required to keep the Department's certification up to date. Mr. Armstrong said he understood the community's concern about noise and so thought perhaps the use of power saws should be limited or certain training activities might be more appropriate at a different location. Mr. Smith noted that training already takes place at both the Depot and New Preston fire houses and there have been no complaints from the public.

Mr. Solley asked if the use of this facility would be limited to one day per month. Mr. Smith said there would be one drill per month and one training session per month, but they would not all take place at this facility. However, he noted the erection of the building was a huge investment and the Department planned to fully utilize it. He estimated the building would be used 12 to 18 times per year. When Mr. Solley suggested that either the type of use for the building be limited or the number of times the building could be used per year be limited, Mr. Averill said he objected to limits on what the Fire Dept. could do. Mr. Solley noted the Commission must also protect the rights of neighbors. He asked if the building was used on Sunday morning, if the activity would not begin until 8:30 a.m. and would end by noon. Mr. Smith said that was so. Mr. Armstrong again said he thought there were things the Dept. would have to train for that might not be appropriate for this site. Mr. Smith explained that Fire Department training is governed by NFPA standards and if the Dept. were to exceed those standards, that specific training would be required to take place off site. Mr. Armstrong said he was still concerned about the "openendedness" of the proposal.

Mr. Solomon thought it would be more appropriate to place restrictions on outsiders using the facilities rather than on Town volunteers.

Mr. Showalter stated training would begin as early as 7:00 a.m. on Sundays and noted that townspeople usually thank the Fire Dept. rather than complain about it.

Mr. Solley asked whether it would be fair to limit drills with other companies to those that supply Washington with mutual

aid. Mr. Smith said the Fire Dept. is not in the business to train outsiders and that 25 people at a time would be the maximum number to use the facility.

Mr. Werkhoven arrived at 8:40 p.m.

MOTION: To close the public hearing to consider the Special Permit application: Section 8.4.20 submitted by the Town of Washington for a Fire Dept. training facility at 10 Blackville Road. By Mr. Averill, seconded by Mr. Reich, and passed 4-0.

Mr. Solley noted the commissioners would now discuss the application and possibly vote on it.

Mr. Averill voiced his full support for the application. He noted the need for training and that this was a public service, said the site was isolated, thought the proposed use was self limiting, and said although the Department estimated it would use the facility 12 to 18 times per year, he saw no problem if this was exceeded.

Mr. Reich agreed, adding the Fire Dept. would be self-regulating and there would be many opportunities for the public to complain to the Zoning Commission if there were abuses.

Mr. Armstrong thought it would not be unreasonable to limit the use of the facility to 18 times a year and the use by mutual aid towns to 4 times per year.

Mr. Solley said he would like to allow the Fire Department self government. He said the Dept. was aware of the need for positive public opinion due to its fundraising efforts and so thought conditions of approval were not necessary at this time. He recommended that when the facility had been in operation for a year, that the Fire Dept. report back to the Zoning Commission.

Mr. Reich noted the Fire Dept. would not be obliged to come back to the Commission for approval if it planned to use the facility a few more times per year than estimated. Mr. Averill and Mr. Solley agreed.

MOTION: To approve the Special Permit application: Section 8.4.20 submitted by the Town of Washington for a Fire Department training facility at 10 Blackville Road. By Mr. Solley, seconded by Mr. Averill, and passed 3-1. Mr. Armstrong voted, No.

Mr. Werkhoven was seated.

Farmer/11/Kirby Road/Install Generator: Mr. Solley explained that Mr. Ajello, ZEO, had sent this administrative application to

the Commission and he read Mr. Ajello's 2/5/18 report. Mr. Szymanski, engineer, represented the applicant. Section 12 requires that generators be located closer to the structure principally served than to any boundary line. Mr. Solley and Mr. Averill noted the large size of the proposed generator and questioned why such a large amount of energy would be needed to service the small garage. Mr. Szymanski read Section 12.1.4 and noted the generator would not comply with the Regulations if it served the main residence. The site plan, "Zoning Location Map," by Arthur H. Howland and Assoc., revised to 12/13/17 was reviewed. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the source of the power to the garage and whether it was likely the generator would be used to serve the dwelling. It was noted that years ago the noise from a generator on this property, which had been installed very close to the boundary line, had impacted neighbors. Mr. Reich asked what was Mr. Ajello's problem with the application. Mr. Solley explained although the proposed generator location was too far from the main dwelling to comply with Section 12, it would be relatively easy to install this generator to serve the main dwelling anyway. Mr. Armstrong asked if the generator would run regularly for the garage. Mr. Wright, electrician, said, no, it was for emergency back up only. Mr. Solley recommended a condition of approval that the property owner submit a notarized affidavit that the proposed generator would not be used to serve the principal building on the property. Regarding the installation of generators, Mr. Wright complained that compliance with the Zoning Regulations has resulted in safety hazards and he recommended the Regulations be revised.

MOTION: To approve the application submitted by Mr. Farmer to install a generator at 11 Kirby Road per the site plan by Arthur H. Howland and Assoc. revised to 12/13/17 subject to the following condition: that the property owner submit a notarized affidavit stating that the proposed generator will not be used to serve the principal building on the property. By Mr. Solley, seconded by Mr. Averill, passed 5-0.

Mr. Solley adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Hill, Land Use Administrator