

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes from their attendance at the Planning Board Meeting
April 30, 2025

In attendance from the Select Board: John Rescigno, Tony Albert and Sara Smith (Town Administrator)

Absent: Ron Madan

In attendance from Planning Board: Deb Johnson, Dave Madden, Jon Beliveau, Ray Blake, Russ Carruth and Eric Jones

Audience Members present

The Select Board attended the Planning Board Meeting. Deb called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

The Planning Board had their meeting and worked through their agenda items. The Select Board were in attendance to discuss potential zoning ordinance amendments especially ones pertaining to living in a camper and the 180-day rule. Deb asked the Select Board if they are okay with the Planning Board discussing the building permit first and they were. They said they will be staying for the entire meeting any way. These Select Board minutes will only contain the items that involve the Select Board as the Planning Board meeting minutes from today will cover these items as well and all other items discussed.

Building Permit- Map 2 Lot 21

The Town received a building permit for Map 2 Lot 21 which is on the private section of Bailey Hill so Sara sent it to Deb and the Planning Board along with the deed and the restrictive covenants for review. Deb explained that this was submitted as a seasonal structure so Sara asked for more information and found out it is for a seasonal camp. The family owns two lots up there, one of which already has a house on it that the brother is living in. This is on the other lot that currently does not have anything on it. Sara explained that her plan is to just use the seasonal camp when she comes up to visit and will use the house for the bathroom. Deb said there is nothing on the covenants or deed that prevent a seasonal camp from being built. Deb mentioned that Sara has already talked to them about the release of municipal liability so they will be bringing that in. No one had any questions or concerns. Deb said that the Planning Board will recommend that the Select Board approve the permit contingent on them following the covenants and submitting the release form and recording fee.

RV/Camper Living

Sara sent an email to the Planning Board on behalf of the Select Board on March 5, 2025 regarding living in a camper and the 180-day rule. She asked if this applies to living in a camper while building when they have submitted a building permit. The Select Board knew this came up during the Zoning Meetings so they thought this was added to the Zoning Ordinance but it was not. The Select Board feel it should be.

Deb provided a list of her questions and concerns. John mentioned that we should just address the questions one at a time. He felt that putting this list of questions out to everyone and the way they were worded shows that she is against this and could persuade others to also be against it. He felt the questions should have been held for discussion at the meeting, not a handout. Deb said she is not against it and did not mean for the list to come across that way and they were meant for discussion.

Debs main question is who would enforce the 180 days. John mentioned it would be enforced the same way the 180 days is now that is already in the zoning ordinance. Sara explained that this may be hard to track but it would be easier than tracking that friends and family can stay in the camper for 180 days since that is not consecutive days and this would be. We could do a follow up 180 days from when the permit was approved.

Deb asked what would happen if they needed to go beyond the 180 days. John said that would be a case-by-case scenario but if they have the house almost done, they could grant an extension. Sara also added that it may be easier to track if we matched the building the building permit. Building permits are valid for two years so you could grant them to live in the camper for that time so when the permit timeframe is up then the living in the camper timeframe would be up as well.

Sara mentioned that Tony brought up in one of our meetings about allowing people to live in campers as long as they meet certain conditions. Deb said that Cindy Carpenter and Dawn and Mike Lemieux have brought up in the past that they would like to have the option as they get older to travel more and then just stay on their campers on the property while they are home. Sara said this comes up quiet often and she has been informed that when people ask if they can stay in a camper on their land, they are told no. Sara doesn't understand that if friends and family can stay in campers on the property, why the landowners cannot if they have water and can show how they are disposing of waste. Sara said that we currently have people living in campers so she doesn't understand why that is okay but we are telling others they cannot. Deb said these people are grandfathered in since they were living in them before the ordinance was amended. Sara said there have been people since then that we believe are living in campers or have moved campers to their properties and we are not sure how often they are staying there. It is very hard to track the 180 days when it is 10 days here and 10 days there since we do not and shouldn't go check them every day. Sara asked what the reasons are that people cannot live in them now besides the zoning ordinance says so. If there are concerns with water and septic, then those should also be the concerns for the existing ones. Sara feels we should allow it for all if we are for some. We could add it to the zoning ordinance to make certain requirements in order to live in an RV.

Sara did research online and one place states "if you abide by certain rules and restrictions, New Hampshire Permits you to live in your RV full time. Your RV will need to pass all safety inspections and be equipped with a shower, bathroom and sewage disposal system if you are using it as a residence. You will also need to abide by the zoning laws in your area."

There was a lot of great discussion regarding this. Jon Beliveau said he is not against looking into other options as long as it is in the Towns best interest. He has concerns about how this will affect the current zoning ordinance because currently in the current zoning ordinance when it discusses tiny houses it states that the tiny houses must be off wheels or have its wheels disable and shall be attached to a permanent foundation. Sara asked if he is saying we will need to change the zoning ordinance or if they will want to make the campers match this. John asked if campers would be able to have the wheels removed. Jon said some campers but not the one he has. Sara said that some people may still want to use their RV for travelling so this would be hard to require that. Ray said some RVS are the actual drivable ones that may be someone's vehicle that they need to go to the grocery store, etc. Dave stated that we would have to keep tiny houses separate from campers because tiny houses are actually described as something that is constructed and is a structure like a house. Sara said that there was the one on North Groton Road that had the title that said it was an RV but is now a tiny home so that could cause some issues. Dave and Deb said that there were issues with that one because the place that sold it would call it both a tiny house and an RV.

Deb asked if we do allow this would we require a building permit. John did not feel that we should because it is not actually being built. John thinks we should create an RV permit. Sara said we cannot go by that reason because we require building permits currently for mobile homes that are being delivered already together and are not built here, also we require them for pre-made sheds that are delivered already built if they are over 100 square feet. Sara does think an RV permit is a good idea because it will not be for the reason that it is not being built but keeps it separate because it is an RV. Deb said we could add a line to the existing permit for this. Sara

said it would have to be more than a line because she thinks we would want to ask all of the questions about water, shower, toilet, septic system, etc. Jon and Dave said that they think it would need all of that as well. It was agreed that it should be a separate RV permit. Deb asked if we are going to create that or if we should have the attorney. Sara said she can create one that mimics our building permit. John agreed that we should create one and then sent to the attorneys for review. This will also save on costs. Sara mentioned that when she was doing her research it also listed towns that do not forbid living in an RV. Sara said she would reach out to those towns to see if they do allow it, if they have permits for it, who enforces it, what the requirements are, etc. Dave said that we may be able to see what the other towns have for permits as well which will help create one.

Deb summarized what was discussed and asked if everyone agreed that we would move forward with this for the zoning amendments. It was also agreed that it should be stated that RVs cannot be rented out.

Deb said it has to wait until next year so the Town can vote on it at Town Meeting. Sara said they didn't expect an answer tonight or for it to happen today but they know that it takes a long time for these changes including meetings with attorneys, public hearings etc. Deb said they will have to start on all of that now since it does take time but they did not budget for it. John and Tony mentioned that it is a bottom-line budget so as long as the overall budget is not over, we can go over in that line.

Sara will reach out to the towns and will work on the RV permit. The Planning Board will start working on the items they need to.

Dog/farm animals

Deb had mentioned that Ruth and Sara had emailed to see if there was anything in any of the ordinances regarding dogs or animals. They did some research and they couldn't find anything but wanted to check with Deb. There has been a lot of issues lately with dog concerns and dogs barking all night. Ruth found that NH has a limit of 30 dogs and any dog that is sold needs a "certificate of transfer" from a NH Veterinarian. All dogs should be licensed yearly with updated rabies. Ruth stated we have two residences with multiple dogs and we are trying to make an effort to get the dog issues under control. Sara also mentioned that there was the concerns of noise and multiple dogs that was posted on the Groton Community page but has since been taken down.

Deb confirmed that there is not anything in the zoning ordinance and asked if everyone thought there should be. It was agreed that this should be covered in a different ordinance and not the zoning ordinance. It was asked what the current noise ordinance is. Sara said we have a Town ordinance but it briefly covers noise. It does not have hours like some towns do. Sara mentioned that when this was looked into before, there was something mentioned about if the dog barks for more than 30 minutes straight it can be considered a noise violation. Sara will check with Chief to see if this is an RSA and if the PD has another other noise ordinances in place that she is not aware of. We can also look to see if we need to update the town ordinance.

The rest of the items discussed can be found in the Planning Board minutes for today's meeting.

Having no other business to conduct, Deb motioned to adjourn at 8:10pm, Dave 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Town Administrator