Call to Order

Dale Buchanan, Planning Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM and reviewed the meeting agenda. Emma Snellings, Assistant Planner, explained that the meeting was being held via Zoom recorded and broadcast live by WACA TV. She provided the video conference meeting access numbers and passcodes.

Presentation by Cece Doucette on wireless technology

Cece Doucette gave a presentation entitled Wireless Technology Risks & Safer Municipal Solutions. Ms. Doucette’s focus was to bring awareness concerning radio frequency radiation issues. She highlighted studies conducted on cellphone radiation emissions that identified cancers, DNA damage, infertility, and neurotoxicity effects. The research also indicated that children are particular vulnerable.

Concerning cell tower density, Ms. Doucette cited non-industry funded science outlined in antennasearch.com. She explained that 5G technology is the addition of short millimeter waves that cannot go through objects and therefore highly densified towers are required to support 5G. Ms. Doucette explained the effect cell towers have on adjacent residential areas including property value degradation by roughly 10%. Ms. Doucette expressed that the town’s bylaws should be strengthened to make it difficult for the industry to place towers in residential areas.

Ms. Doucette outlined several recommendations that Ashland can begin to consider transitioning to safe technology.

Mr. Matchak noted that Ms. Doucette’s presentation would be available on the town’s websites and forwarded to the members.

Downtown Zoning Presentation Follow-Up

Mr. Matchak and Ms. Snellings reported on their efforts to arrange the Planning Board public meeting to walk and view the downtown area. The members agreed to meet on February 24, 2021 at 8:45 am to 10:00 am.

Discussion of possible zoning bylaw amendments, including:

Covered Porch bylaw

Mr. Buchanan explained that because many houses are built close to the front easement or front yard setback, the zoning bylaw requires a Special Permit or Variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to allow a front porch addition from being built right up to the street. The proposed Front Porch bylaw, added to Section 4, would require a Building Permit for an open-air porch as opposed to a zoning Variance as long as all the conditions were met.

The members reviewed the draft Covered Porch bylaw. They discussed adding language to stipulate the height of open rail guardrails, limit the porch height to one-story, prohibit construction on top of the porch, and the specific setbacks and dimension requirements for various residential heights. The bylaw would be applicable to all Ashland residential zones, including the Overlay District.

Administrative Matters: future meetings, public hearings

The next regular Planning Board meeting is scheduled on February 25, 2021. The downtown walkthrough is scheduled on February 24, 2021.
Mr. Matchak reported there is a resubmitted Permit application for 0 Megunko St. pending the Planning Board's review and will likely be scheduled in March 2021. He provided an update concerning the Transportation Improvement Project that will redo the rail crossing at that location.

In addition, Mr. Matchak mentioned that April Anderson was hired address economic development related to the 10-50 Main St. 40R project and downtown redevelopment.

Mr. Rubertone made a motion to appoint Tricia Kendall and Deepa Venkat to represent the Planning Board on the 10-50 Main St. 40R Subcommittee. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Kendall–aye, Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Rubertone-aye, Buchanan-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

Report from Board Members and Town Planner

None.

Adjournment

Ms. Kendall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Kendall–aye, Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Rubertone-aye, Buchanan-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

Documents

1. February 11, 2021 Agenda