



TOWN OF WARREN  
**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**

## Special Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

*Via Zoom Videoconference (see below for recording link)*

### **Call to Order and Designation of Alternates**

Chairman Jack Baker called the special meeting to order at 5:37pm. Present were Vice Chairwoman Victoria Sahadevan Fossland, Michael Zimet (alternate, seated for Phil Good), Debora Ouellette (alternate, seated for Andrew Carollo). Others absent were Derek Westfall, John Papp, Ryan Curtiss, and alternate Ruth Schnell. Paul Prindle joined the meeting slightly late.

### **Review P&Z expenses to date FY 2020/2021, Review historical spending per year, pre-pandemic average yearly expenses, FY 2018/2019 (during the last revision of the POCD)**

Dr Sahadevan Fossland stated that historically there has not been a need for fiscal review; however the commission had asked to examine the spending pre-Covid-19, during Covid-19, and during the 2020/21 fiscal year. In sharing her screen Dr. Sahadevan Fossland showed that the budget had been \$7,000.00 from the town which jumped in 2018/19 when the POCD was revised. At that time \$15,000.00 was set aside, and \$10,900.00 was spent. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that this year evaluating the POCD again may require additional funding. The spending had jumped again between 2019/20 to 2020/21. The main difference is seen in the “professional services” line. Ms. Hodza stated that she believed this line was to pay Mr. Marty Connor during the absence of a land use officer. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland asked how they might anticipate if they would need this funding for “professional services”. Ms. Hodza stated that professional services could also apply to any necessary professional hire needed, and it can't be predicted as there is no way to know the lapse in positions for example. Ms. Ouellette asked if hiring an attorney for review would be an example, Ms. Hodza stated that would be covered in legal fees. Ms. Hodza discussed the timeline of Mr. Connor and his predecessor. Mr. Prindle joined the meeting at this time. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland showed via screen share of a document that after  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the current fiscal year, the number of permits processed is greater than the previous years. Mr. Chairman stated that the 2400 professional services fee is not known to be a recurring expense as Ms. Hodza remains in the position and they do not anticipate anyone needing to fill in. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that in the coming year zoom meeting fees should drastically go down. Ms. Hodza stated that it is necessary to wait for the governor to make his statements however there is a possibility to be required to have hybrid meetings (both in person and accessible via zoom) which could incur greater expenses. Ms. Hodza stated that if it is no longer required to publish in the newspaper, that could save funding, however it may change to require newspaper postings again which would increase costs. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland asked why each meeting costs a specific amount. A discussion was held on the cost of a zoom account and if the meetings cost 35\$ per meeting for each department. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland asked the commission if they had any further questions.

### **Discuss anticipated new expenses for FY 2021/2022 and whether necessary , additional hours or personnel allotted for Land Use/Zoning Enforcement office support**

Mr. Chairman stated that he had met with Ms. Hodza and Ms. Colleen Frisbie (Administrative Assistant to the First Selectman, Human Resources Manager, and Town Treasurer) regarding the necessary help for planning and zoning. Ms. Hodza works 20 hours a week based on the budget allotted (12-15 as Land Use Officer and 8 – 5 as Clerical Worker). The committee does not have the authority to request more money for employees in the zoning department; it goes through HR and discussions with Ms. Hodza and the selectman, however, commission and discuss the need for more hours rather than more dollars. The commission presented having a part time person be hired for 15 hours per week. The commission could write a letter of recommendation to HR and the selectman to have a person begin July 1 2021 for a person to be added to the department. Ms. Hodza stated that due to her personal life the month of April is difficult; in May she would

be able to spend more hours in clerical work as well as zoning. Ms. Hodza reminded the commission that she works with the other commissions, ZBA and IWC so when 15 hours are requested, the planning and zoning commission will actually only be allotted 7. Ms. Ouellette asked if the hours were just clerical or would also include site visits etc. Ms. Hodza stated that it would require some training as some of the help required is somewhat more involved as the person would need to know statutes, lingo, secretarial etc. Mr. Chairman stated that HR would hire and interview this person, that there is an opportunity to co-op with another town with a person who may already have some experience. Ms. Hodza stated that she would suggest the chairman of each commission as well as herself (the zoning officer) be present at the interviews. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that the note then would be simply to support having more support within the zoning office. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that when the budget is approved the process of searching and hiring can begin and expedite getting someone on board. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland made a MOTION to write a letter in support of additional hours to the town treasurer, board of selectman and board of finance; Ms. Ouellette SECONDED the motion; all were in favor. The MOTION CARRIED.

### **Consultant Fees**

There was a question about what the “consultant fees” were for. Ms. Hodza stated that they were mainly for Martin Connor who was subcontracted during the absence of a Land Use Officer.

### **Commission member training**

Dr. Sahadevan Fossland discussed the commission member training as an item that would increase in cost. In past fiscal years the hourly rate would be 70\$/hour for training from COG. Identified that commission member training via COG staff can be determined by the commission. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that there are also various free trainings, that would be alternative than the paid consultants.

### **Possibly creating zoning commission bylaws**

Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that at maximum this process would take 4 hours to create and implement by-laws. At this time, there are no zoning commission by-laws, for example, the meaning of a quorum, the process for getting new commission members and/or loss of members who do not attend meetings etc.

### **Implementing POCD goals**

Depending on the goal the time it would take for a consultant to come in and train, it can vary widely. It would be determined by the commission which goals they wanted to focus on.

### **Reviewing current zoning regulations to remain current with state statutes**

Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that this process is typically 4-5 hours to comb through the regulations and be sure they are in alignment with the necessary statutes.

Mr. Zimet asked, if the regulations are a disaster, the time it would take to readdress/rewrite them, it would then be necessary to budget the time it would take to do so. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that Ms. Ayer did not feel the regulations were a disaster, as they were just revised in 2018. Ms. Hodza stated that from a zoning enforcement perspective there are some issues with the regulations, for example, things related to farms e.g., can farms hold private festival or banquets as a way to generate income? Ms. Hodza cautions the commission that while the regulations that are written are done so with sobriety they are lacking in many ways. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that as discussion of priorities continues, possibly the POCD will be backburned as by-laws and regulations need to take precedence.

### **5. Proposed request from FY**

Mr. Chairman stated that overall in reviewing the proposed memo and estimates of consultant fees; 55 hours total of training multiplied by 70\$ per hour that equals 3850\$. Mr. Chairman stated that we would not want to be stalled because they are out of funds, Mr. Chairperson stated the towns taxpayer dollars are sacred, however the better the commission is trained, the better by laws that exist and the better adherence to plan of conservation and development in the long run the town will save money as the commission is more effective. Mr. Chairman stated that he would suggest requesting 3850 or rounding to 4000. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland

stated that she may suggest limiting the sites a bit, by suggesting focusing on more specific items. Mr. Chairman stated that the training and the bylaws are minimal and necessary. Mr. Chairman asked Dr. Sahadevan Fossland if she had a number in mind. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that focusing on the training review of regulations and the by-laws would be necessary, but there are many other non-fee trainings that members could participate in. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated perhaps 2000 to start off on the training available would be better received and applied. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland again pointed out the professional fees line of 2400 that would not be necessary this year and so there is potential to not need the funds to be utilized on the consultants. Mr. Zimet pointed out that once the budget is passed you cannot request more, and that parts of the POCD do affect the zoning regs. Mr. Chairman stated that by cutting the request in half there will be room for some intertwining of the review and the POCD integration. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland stated that Ms. Ayer said that addressing the basic items in the review is necessary before addressing the POCD. Ms. Ouellette stated that Ms. Ayer stated the commission needs to put the regulations first which would then provide a guideline and basis for moving forward with POCD. Dr. Sahadevan Fossland made a MOTION to table the discussion about whether to increase the amount requested from the town until the next meeting, Mr. Prindle SECONDED the motion; all were in favor. The MOTION CARRIED.

### **Opportunity for Public Comment**

Mr. Tammen 50 Curtis Rd stated that this is the most important agency in town. The town has earmarked \$7,000 every year, and he suggested they request \$15,000. Mr. Tammen reviewed some of the yearly spendings since 2014. Mr. Tammen stated that planning and zoning creates revenue.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Prindle made a MOTION to adjourn, Dr. Sahadevan Fossland SECONDED; all were in favor. The MOTION CARRIED. The meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Woodward  
Recording Secretary  
Town of Warren  
4/13/2021

Link to recording

[https://zoom.us/rec/share/ngldKA5tZTmM\\_TuHxAXPkjtLboR1bHRx10RQjX\\_mcUl66vgpDFCdy\\_gXZh8ADtbJj.6jWQV5JBr\\_VFOYO3](https://zoom.us/rec/share/ngldKA5tZTmM_TuHxAXPkjtLboR1bHRx10RQjX_mcUl66vgpDFCdy_gXZh8ADtbJj.6jWQV5JBr_VFOYO3)