

WEST TISBURY PLANNING BOARD MINUTES October 22, 2018 5:30 PM

PRESENT: Ginny Jones, Bea Phear, Leah Smith, Susan Silva, Henry Geller, Matt Merry.

ALSO PRESENT: Adam Turner, Paul Rashba, Doug Ruskin, Paul Veno, Harriet Bernstein, Jane Rossi

Ginny opened the meeting at 5:30 pm.

DISCUSSION:

Informal discussion with Adam Turner, MVC Director:

Anson Luce House 274 Indian Hill Road:

Adam began by stating that there are four topics he would like to address. He explained that over the summer, he was conducting a traffic study in Menemsha, and he learned a lot. He said that he was able to chat with Ginny on occasion in her Menemsha shop, and they discussed current concerns.

Adam first discussed the proposed demolition of some old houses in the town of West Tisbury. One house is located at 234 Indian Hill Road. It is very old and has an addition. It was built in 1750, is close to the road and is on a large parcel of land. The MVC will hold a public hearing as is required for the demolition of historic buildings. Adam said that the house is one of the oldest in town. The house is in poor condition, but the barn could possibly be restored so that not all was lost. Bea stated that she frequently walks by the house and it is in terrible shape. She said she would not object to the demolition. She pointed out that Tara Whiting's house (the old parsonage) is located within the "Historic District" so she was not allowed to demolish it. Susan said 234 Indian Hill Road house has been lived in by large groups of people and there has been no upkeep. She said the land is wet and the house is in terrible shape with dead cars on the property. Leah asked Adam if there was any historic significance to the house. Adam said that it is simply an old house. He said that it would be great if the planning board wanted to weigh in on the issue. Leah said that it's good if someone has the money to renovate to preserve the past, but that it isn't always necessary to save an old house in poor shape. Matt pointed out that he often has to demolish houses. His company recently proposed jacking up an old house rather than demolishing it, but they ran into beetle damage. He asked if the architecture was the reason for preserving the house. He said that perhaps the windows or some of the wood could be salvaged. He explained that in Edgartown, a small percentage of the house has to be preserved as is a town requirement but it can be so small that you wouldn't even know what was saved. Ginny said the problem is that there is a chance that the historic structure will be replaced with something that is out of character with the neighborhood.

It was suggested that the Planning Board draft a letter to the MVC regarding their opinion on the demolitions.

Bea made a motion to draft a letter to the Martha's Vineyard Commission to recommend the demolition of the house due to its poor condition. The board recommends that the replacement house be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood as the road contains several old houses. Leah seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Capt. Edwin Luce House 371 Indian Hill Road:

Adam went on to discuss the condition of the house located at 371 Indian Hill Road. It is also before the MVC, with a request for a demolition permit. The house was purchased by the applicant's father. It is in good condition but the kitchen is very small, and the interior of the house cannot be modernized. The house was built in 1840. He said that if the house is renovated, the kitchen will never be expanded because the layout doesn't favor it. Leah also asked why the kitchen couldn't be expanded by an addition. Matt pointed out that today's strict building codes would make an expansion or a renovation difficult. Leah also asked if the house was registered with the Massachusetts Historic Commission and Adam said he wasn't sure. Bea said that the house is in good shape with a dated kitchen, not a tear-down.

Matt pointed out that the Mayhew house was lifted and moved. Adam said that the new owners want to maintain the traditional look of the house. He wanted to know if the board recommended maintaining the house or demolishing it. The public hearing hasn't been scheduled yet.

Leah made a motion to not recommend a demolition of the house, and to recommend maintaining the exterior look of the house but to not rule out the ability to renovate and/or expand the house, and Bea seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous with one abstention from Matt.

Short Term Rentals:

Adam told the board that the state is addressing Air B&B's. In Boston they compete with the hotels but don't pay rental taxes on the income. The island has a lot of short term rentals. The state has implemented a 3 tier tax rate: 5% of a rental would go to the state, up to 6% could go to a town and 2.75% would be paid toward waste water treatment. The money would be deposited into a Cape and Islands fund and then reimbursed to the town. Adam said the bill is going to pass. Leah asked if the tax applied to monthly rentals. Adam said it applies to any rentals of over a two week period and it doesn't matter if the owner lives on the property or not. He said the tax could bring in up to a million dollars annually for the town. Matt asked if there was any data regarding how many rentals there are in West Tisbury. Adam said they do have data but the tax will not come into play for a year or so. It will have to go to Town Meeting for a vote. He said the state will create a registry and there is no real plan in place for the spending. Doug Ruskin said that if we opt for the 6% then we can designate what we want to use the money for. Leah clarified that each rental unit will have to be inspected and registered, and the town will be responsible for that.

North Tisbury Culvert:

Adam explained that about six months ago the MVC obtained a grant to hire an engineer for town projects. He said they are using an island engineer for this project. The plan is to place bike and pedestrian structures on each side of the bridge. They have hired Howard Stein Hudson to do the design work. Matt stated that the bridge is very narrow now and the radius is dangerous. Matt said he would like to see a draft of the proposal.

Steamship Authority:

Adam said that the MVC is trying to figure out what is going on with the character of the island. He said they met with the Steamship Authority and talked about numbers. He said they want to gain a better understanding of what islanders want and they will draft a report of their findings. Ginny asked about the statistics regarding cars that are registered with the SSA on the island. She said it seems that many of