

Washington Planning Board

Public Hearing Minutes

November 9, 2021

0.0 Assembly: 7:00PM at Town Hall

0.1 Members present: Hatch, Kluk, Revane and Schwartz

0.2 Alternates present: None

0.3 Attendees: Meghan Tweedy, Doria Kutrubes, Kenneth Cornell, Cynthia Harvey, Peter Mellen, Gail Revane, Georgann Casey, Tim Ferwerda, Roger Cullen, Al Bruno, Jenny Bruno, James Bruno, Tom Barton, Patricia Martin, Donald Piscopo, Laura Piscopo, Steven Becker, Kathy Becker, Jim Garvin, Cody Graham, Yvonne Bachand, Sharon Myer Yusko, Rudy Galdonik, Kate Johnson, Jeremy Harvey, Deb DeFosse, Tom Marshall, Frank Fezishin, Allan Dube, Lori Dube, Chrisee McKay, Jon Gibson, Kristy Simpson, Sandy Brim, Brock Cullen

1.0 Public Hearing:

Chair Andrew Hatch opened the hearing at 6:30PM and he thanked everyone for attending. He explained the Planning Board's process and stated that this is a preliminary hearing because we have not received a completed application package. The Planning Board has given Cullen a list of missing information from his application. Hatch explained that the town has a single zoning district, allowing a commercial business as a permitted use in all parts of town. A storage facility is a permitted use. He asked Roger Cullen to explain his plan for a storage facility on lot TM11-27-5, Rte. 31 North Main Street. The latest plan for the site and buildings was projected on the screen and copies of a package of information about the project was left on a side table and most were taken by attendees.

Cullen introduced himself and spoke about recent growth in the town and people residing in seasonal homes with lots of items to store. He said they are keeping things on their lots and making them unsightly; there are few places to store items in nearby towns. He said he purchased 13.5 acres on the outskirts of town and by putting a facility there it should aid in keeping things tidier in town. He said he has adjusted the plan and will be parking vehicles nearer the storage units to the right hand side nearly 400' off of Rte. 31. He pointed out the location of the shop/heavy equipment storage for his Construction Business closer to Rte. 31. He said he is trying to supply a solution to the junky yard challenges the town faces. He sees items scattered in yards down near the lakes with nowhere to store things. He is open to suggestions for making it fit better in the location. He feels there are issues all over town except in the Town Common area. He said his plan isn't complete but he thinks he meets or exceeds the LUO requirements. He is open to questions on his plan and he doesn't want to put in an eyesore.

Hatch opened the hearing up to comments or questions and asked that the abutters speak first. Meghan Tweedy stated that she sold the property to Cullen, she subdivided her land for people to build a house with land around the house and in a way that was responsible and in keeping with the Town's vision. She spoke about her ancestral roots in town and her deep concern about the land. She said she is upset and was deceived by Cullen when asked what his intention was for the property. She was told that it was for a spec house or a building for his business. She would have put a covenant on the land. She is upset for the abutters. She feels Cullen is rationalizing the need for his proposed business and she doesn't think it will clean up the town. She knows she can't stop it at this point but wants Cullen to make it so the town can't see it.

Hatch pointed out the two storage buildings on the raised area with a large open area for vehicle storage.

Cullen said that since he received the list from the Planning Board the parking area has been moved to the left of the upper buildings and they are working on an engineered storm water plan.

Frank Fezishin asked about parking for RVs. Cullen said he doesn't have space for huge motor homes, but will take smaller campers or camping RVs. He thinks there is not a lot of added traffic on Rte. 31.

Fezishin stated that he and his wife were hoping to have peace and quiet for their retirement and now he is a nervous wreck. He stated that Cullen never came to speak with him and he is concerned about early morning and late night noise. He said he teaches on three continents and sleeps during the day. The logging at the site went on for 3 months disturbing him and he wanted to know who would be happy with this next door. He spoke with a realtor who valued his property high until he found out what might be built next door and the value dropped. He wished Cullen had come over to talk with him because he is 100% affected. He believes that if this is built then more commercial enterprises will follow.

Cody Graham said his property is across the street and he is opposed citing the traffic and noise, he doesn't think it is a good idea.

Cynthia Harvey said she lives on the north side of the next 13-acre lot in the subdivision. She walks her dog and snowshoes through the land. She said there are lots of wetlands to be concerned about and asked that the property is looked at in the spring as it is very wet. She said the Town Center Vision committee is looking at the center of town and this is right around the corner. Once this lot is commercially built the lot next to hers will be difficult to sell. She has no opinion on it as a place to put stuff, she had to downsize and get rid of stuff when she moved in. She feels people should get rid of stuff instead of hanging on to it and she is concerned about the noise. She made a concession when she bought her place to live right next to the road, there is already traffic all hours of the night already. She is concerned about the heavy storage building and what it will look like and property values.

Cullen said that the lower storage building, closest to Main Street, would be built eventually but not right away. He introduced Tim Ferwerda saying he is a wetland scientist, does septic designs and used to work for Meridian and that wetlands are a concern for him, too. There is a 75-foot setback from wetlands and he is trying to be least impactful. Cullen said you can't choose your neighbors, with a storage facility people come in and leave. It is not like a retail place with a lot of traffic and no partying.

Fezishin said that with large equipment in the winter you have to run it and let it warm up and idle causing noise. Cullen said that it is storage only, no idling.

Georgann Casey had a list of questions for Cullen. She asked who abuts the lot in the rear and Cullen said the lot is steep in the back and abuts Peter Mellen. She asked how many units are planned. Cullen answered that two buildings were planning with 27 spaces per building. He said that he was constrained by the LUO which says he can't build more than 10K sq. ft. without going to Town Meeting for a town vote. He won't build anymore. She asked the size of the storage building which he said is 40X60 feet with a 14-foot door. She asked how many parking spaces he was allowing for and he said he hadn't yet planned the dedicated spaces. She asked if he had done a traffic study to see if there is an increase in traffic. He said he hadn't and there wouldn't be that much traffic. Casey asked if people can't afford to put up a garage, how can they afford to rent a unit? Cullen said the cost is by the size of the unit between \$80-\$180 a month. Casey said that a homesteader can't afford this and he won't be helping people like he says he is.

Tom Barton said he lives on North Main Street $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away from the site. He feels Cullen won't pull a fast one on the town, if drug dealing goes on there he will stop it. He thinks if it is open 24 hours there should be a secure gate.

Casey commented that it should be fenced all around and secure.

Barton asked about lighting. Cullen said a gate is planned and the site is impossible to access except by the driveway. He doesn't want to fence the property. If anything shady is going on he will know about it, he will give the Police access.

Jon Gibson reiterated that over 10K of building space requires a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting but outside storage doesn't count toward that number, only buildings. He would request down lighting. Tweedy said you can't cause light pollution on an abutting property.

Steve Becker commented that 24 hour access requires lighting all the time, he is concerned about diesel trucks and the need to run them. He has vacationed in Bridgeton Maine and they opened the door to commercial businesses and the town deteriorated with more commercial coming in. He feels our town common is beautiful and our LUO says that no new business that takes away from the rural character of the town will be allowed. He is concerned about traffic. He asked why Cullen would want to do this.

Cullen answered that he has been here longer and has seen the town change drastically. There are many more snowmobiles and ATVs running the roads, it used to be a slower tempo, his intent is to provide a place to put stuff.

Doria Kutrubes said she is a relative newcomer but is here representing herself and Peter Giovi who lived here for 25 years until his house burned in 2018. She said there is a deep history in the land and many animals in the area. She has seen bobcats, bears and coyotes. She is a hydro geologist and has looked at the clearing and gravel areas. She asked if an environmental impact study had been done or will be done. She spoke about recharge areas and discharge areas and impervious surfaces. She said animals use the upland for habitat. She asked if bedrock is found whether there will be blasting. She stated that the deep history and deep pre-history need to be considered.

Hatch stated that a long list of requirements were given to Cullen, by the board.

Lori Dube commented that she is hearing fear, she feels this project fits with a residential area. People from in town will rent in town and the project will be screened by the wooded area and it will look like Washington.

Sharon Myer Yusko commented that Cullen built her house after tearing down their old camp. He was careful of the wetlands and she can't imagine that the project would be ugly, she looks forward to it happening.

Tweedy stated when she asked him what he was going to do with the land he didn't mention storage.

Cullen said that when you make an offer on property you usually use a realtor. He said there was lots of time before closing, she didn't say anything and he said afterward that he was going to use it for storage.

Brock Cullen said he is Cullen's son and works with his dad. He plans to stay here in town. He said his dad will make it look like Washington and keeping things in town allows people to stay here and not have to go to Hillsboro or Newport. He wants us to consider this, Cullen will do things to make it nice.

Tom Marshall stated he knows about Planning Board requirements, he was a member in the past, and they have the authority to consider the comments made here today and work things out. He thinks this is a good spot for this, with luck, once it is worked through. He said that the Planning Board is mandated to follow the rules, we have to post meetings/hearings in public places. He said that now the board needs to sit with Cullen and his completed application and work things out. He thinks Planning Board members will do what is best for the town, they are mandated to make a fair decision.

Kristy Simpson said she is shocked. The LUO states that the purpose of the ordinance is to lessen congestion in the streets, promote health and general welfare and many other provisions, she is concerned about the abutter's peace and quiet enjoyment. She asked Cullen why he doesn't put this down in the area where he sees the biggest need. She said this is a beautiful place, why do we need this. She mentioned 24/7 security needs and since she moved here there has been a lot of people taking other people's things. She feels if people have to travel to Hillsboro that's ok. She is concerned about the wetlands and how he will keep people out of there that don't belong.

Hatch explained that we have one zone in town and we have to make sure the regulations are met. We are talking with the applicant and there will be more opportunities to comment on the project. He said we are conscious about noticing and it will be an open process.

Jenny Bruno said she is a 14-year resident and she lives next door to a contractor and near to a logging company. She said some days are hellish because of noise and she has moved her home office because of large equipment noise. She said we all live here knowing we have to travel to get things, she wants to know what is next?

Yvonne Bachand said she has been here 18 years and is concerned about noise and congestion. She couldn't find a storage unit anywhere for her kid's stuff. She sees a need and thinks the business will be quiet. She trusts the Board and Cullen lives here and will do it tastefully.

Jim Garvin said he is a 44-year resident and a staunch supporter of land owner rights. He said his father-in-law always worried when new people moved in they would complain about the smells and activity at the farm and try to shut him down. There is nothing that would stop someone from putting a hog farm in on the lot. He said the Planning Board will make Cullen jump through hoops and if he doesn't meet the LUO it won't happen. He said he is in support.

Kutrubes said several have mentioned that there is one zone in town and asked if that could change.

Hatch said that since 1975 when the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment were established zoning has remained the same. He said the town has been anti-regulation in the past. The boards are made up of volunteers that give their time to this and we always need members and he encouraged people to meet with the board. He thanked everyone for their civility tonight. Laura Piscopo said she has been here 3 years and she found this very interesting and asked how long is the process.

Hatch said the preliminary Public Hearing was tonight and we are waiting for a complete application and the stamped plan. Cullen is considering changes at this point. The clock is not ticking for a decision yet and we will notice for a new Public Hearing in the future.

At this point, hearing no other requests for comment, Hatch closed the public hearing at 8:25PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nan Schwartz