**PLANNING BOARD 2020**

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 **Planning Board organization**

Jessica Albrecht was elected to a five-year term in May. Although there were several write-ins for a second, two-year remainder of a term, the top two each received four votes, resulting in a tie. No individual approached the board to request appointment, leaving the position unfilled for the remainder of the year. The board elected David Roberson to serve as chairman and as representative to the Franklin Regional Planning Board, and elected Dan Burke to serve as secretary (clerk).

 Late in the year, Paul McLatchy III announced that he was resigning from the Planning Board, and at the end of 2020 the board consists of only three members. The Planning Board thanks Paul for his service.

 The Planning Board is advised and represented by Greenfield attorney Donna MacNicol, who also serves as town counsel for a number of area municipalities.

**Permitting**

No Special Permits were granted in 2020.

 Resident Greg Poehlein approached the board regarding a short-term rental in his home, for which he had received a Special Permit in 2015. Rowe’s bylaws state that if substantial use or construction is not begun within one year of a Special Permit’s effective date, the permit shall lapse (the maximum under Massachusetts law is three years). Because no such substantial use or construction had occurred, the board found that it was not able to affirm or renew the permit, and a new hearing and permit is required. However, a minimum of four members must vote affirmatively for such a Special Permit to be issued, and with two seats vacant the board cannot grant the permit.

 The board was approached by a developer interested in pursuing a commercial-scale energy storage project in the vicinity of Davenport Road. It was determined that such a use is not permissible under the current bylaws. The developer then suggested that the Planning Board seek a bylaw change that would allow such use, for which they would provide guidance. The chairman declined to pursue this action.

 The board was approached by staffers at a land trust to sign off on multiple Approval Not Required (ANR) survey plans in conjunction with what they called a wildlife corridor incorporating public access trails in Charlemont and Rowe. Despite ostensibly being a planning issue, the land trust was primarily pursuing this initiative through the selectmen. Signing off on the plans would have required the board to physically examine and sign multiple large plats (maps) for each ANR request, and with town buildings closed due to the virus, this was not possible. No further communication has been received regarding this proposal since April.

 No tree hearings were held by the Planning Board in 2020. In late November a single-page, unsigned list of trees was forwarded to the chairman by the Town Clerk. With no identified proponent and no action requested, none was taken.

**Planning**

The board was preparing to notify residents of a hearing for some proposed bylaw changes in the spring of 2020 when the extent of the challenges occasioned by the pandemic began to grow apparent. Because of this, the hearing was subsequently canceled.

Respectfully submitted by David Roberson, for the Planning Board,

David Roberson, Chairman

Dan Burke, Secretary

Jessica Albrecht