

Village of Schoharie Planning Board

February 12, 2024

Meeting Minutes and Public Hearing Notes

In Attendance:

Board members: Dusty Putnam, Tim Repicky, Tom Hitter, Steve Babbitt, Russ Shaw

Board Consultants: Dave Brennan

Applicants: Dr. Hazem Elbially, Robert Stout

Public: Patsy Nicosia (Times Journal), Patty Manchester, Mary Manchester, Denise Lloyd, Marion Vandenheuvel, David Knoop, Colleen Henry (Mayor), Peter Johnson (Deputy Mayor)

The evening began with a Public Hearing for the Schoharie Dental Phase 3 Waiting Room Addition, followed immediately by a planning board meeting.

The Public Hearing began at 7:00 p.m. Background info: At the most recent planning board meeting on Jan. 29, we had referred the application to the County Planning Commission (CPC) per the municipal law process of 'County Referral'. The CPC had reviewed the application at their Feb. 5 meeting and recommended an Approval With Modification : The village was to provide an upgraded crosswalk with enhanced pedestrian safety features. The CPC meeting and the stipulation had been featured in the local newspaper. This complicated the situation, since neither the planning board nor the village gov't has jurisdiction over Main St-- it is a state highway and under NYS Dept of Transportation jurisdiction. We could submit a request to DOT for a crosswalk upgrade, but past requests for speed limit reductions have been unsuccessful.

In a stroke of good fortune, the chairperson of the CPC , Denise Lloyd, attended the Public Hearing. She clarified the intent of the Commission's ruling: they heartily approved the waiting room addition, but felt pedestrian safety improvements beyond just a striped crosswalk were needed if pedestrian (and Schoharie Dental employee) usage was increased. Mayor Colleen Henry mentioned that increased pedestrian activity is expected when the new recreational trail opens in the near future, and she will be meeting later in February with state assemblyman Chris Tague to discuss how to obtain increased pedestrian safety measures for the stretch of south Main St southward towards the village line. Comments from other speakers mainly pertained to the parking conditions for the special use permit, past efforts to obtain lower speed limits from DOT along South Main St., and explanations of land use regulations. No speaker voiced opposition to the waiting room addition.

Tim made a motion to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Russ, and all voted in favor.

Then the planning board meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m.

The draft meeting minutes from Jan. 29 were presented for revision and approval and no changes were suggested. Russ made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Tim, and approved 5-0.

Old Business

Schoharie Dental (Elbially) Phase 3 Expansion:

We resumed the review process, with the intent to complete it before leaving. The next step in the process was:

- Deliberation and decision, drafting of a resolution with findings and decision

We discussed the impact of the CPC modification on the project timeline. The applicant and the board had previously settled on 4 conditions pertaining to parking, but they were to only apply during the waiting room construction period. Dr. Elbially hopes to begin in early Spring with the construction lasting 3-4 months. We both thought a pedestrian-activated flashing beacon (RRFB: Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon) would be a suitable solution to the crosswalk pedestrian safety concerns, with the village gov't and Schoharie Dental working collaboratively without delay to request this improvement from DOT.

Realistically, based on past experiences, there is no guarantee that DOT will approve the desired safety features. Much time could elapse before installation, even if approved. Schoharie Dental needs the added waiting room space today and the special use condition for 7 employees to park across the street and use the crosswalk will be just for the duration of construction. We settled on the following approach: We would approve the site plan review and special use permit, rule out the CPC condition for the approaching early Spring construction start, but commit the village gov't and Schoharie Dental to expediently seek improved crosswalk pedestrian safety measures, preferably RRFB's, from DOT. State municipal law rules require a majority + 1 vote by the planning board to override the CPC modification.

Dave Brennan presented a draft resolution with findings and decision for approval of the waiting room expansion, with 4 conditions pertaining to parking during the construction period. (Rob Stout had drafted it and submitted it to Dave for adjustments). He proposed adding a phrase to the special use conditions that stated we were acting contrary to the wishes of the CPC regarding immediate pedestrian safety improvements at the crosswalk, but that the Planning Board, village gov't, and Schoharie Dental would expeditiously seek approval from DOT for improvements, preferably the flashing beacons (RRFB).

Tom made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Tim.

The vote was 5-0 in favor: the waiting room project is approved with conditions. To finalize the decision, the chairperson will sign and issue documents:

1. Resolution to village clerk.
2. Report of Final Action to the County Planning Commission within 30 days

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Future Meetings

No regularly scheduled meeting; chairperson to establish the next meeting as needed.

Respectfully,
Steve Babbitt