

**ATKINSON PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2023**

**Members:**

Sue Killam, Chair (present)  
Vice Chair Turell (present)  
Ted Stewart (present)  
Paul Wainwright, (present)

John Ottow (present)  
Heidi Mahoney (present)  
Bill Baldwin– Selectman Ex Officio  
(present)  
Hannah Rizzo, Alternate (present)  
Sue Coppeta, Alternate (present)

**Others Present**

Julie LaBranche, Planner (present)  
Ken Grant  
Karen McFadden, Master Plan Team

**Call to Order:**

Chair Killam called the regular meeting to order at 7:30 PM. She informed the Board that the agenda had changed and there would be a non-public session. She requested everyone except Planning Board members leave the room for the non-public session.

Eight Members and alternates of the Atkinson Planning Board are present. Voting members will be Chair Killam, Vice Chair Turell, Selectman Ex-Officio Baldwin, Member Stewart, Member Ottow, Member Mahoney and Member Wainwright.

**Non-Public Session: 7:30 pm**

- RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Reputation

**Selectman Ex-Officio Baldwin made a motion to go into nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) reputation. Seconded by Vice Chair Turell. Vote: 7/0/0. All voting in favor.**

**Public Session : - 8:38 pm**

**Vice Chair Turell made a motion to seal the non-public minutes until April 18, 2024. Seconded by Member Mahoney.**

**Minutes: October 4, 2023**

**Vice Chair Turell made a motion to approve the minutes for the October 4, 2023 workshop meeting as amended. Member Mahoney seconded the motion. All voting members of the Atkinson Planning Board in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.**

**Workshop Topics:**

## **1. Housing Needs Assessment Project – Julie LaBranche**

- a. Review of Revised Draft of Report – not discussed
- b. Review the Results of the Regulatory Audit – not discussed
- c. Discussion of Outreach Plans through October 2023

Ms. LaBranche is waiting for responses. She has given a series of dates. Member Ottow, Member Mahoney, Alternate Coppeta and Alternate Rizzo informed her that they would like to be included in the outreach discussion. Ms. LaBranche agreed.

## **2. Zoning Topics – Potential March 2024 Amendments**

- a. Potential Changes to Atkinson Zoning for ADUs

Chair Killam asked the Board that, in the midst of talking about housing needs and the Master Plan, if there are any other changes to the ADU regulations that the Board would like to discuss. One issue is whether they may be bigger. Another issue is whether the Town should consider detached ADUs, currently the ordinance allows one attached ADU. State regulations allow for detached ADUs and many communities currently allow them. Also, should more than one ADU be allowed on lots with certain size capacities. Atkinson does not have much remaining land that can be developed but there are still seven and ten acre lots. Alternate Coppeta suggested allowing larger houses to be divided if soils allow it. She also suggested discussing why Atkinson requires one unit to be owner occupied. She pointed out that there is no requirement that a house be owner-occupied. Ms. LaBranche stated that the reason was so there would not be two rental properties.

Member Stewart stated that taking big homes and making rental units out of them is a hard sell. As far as detached, for example, there is a beautiful detached garage on Westside Drive with a big room over it that would make an excellent detached ADU. He does not understand how a detached ADU could not look like a duplex. There are examples all around town. He does not believe voters would allow taking big homes and dividing them up.

Alternate Coppeta asked how zoning could be changed to allow detached ADUs. The Planning Board does not review designs. Chair Killam mentioned tiny houses. Alternate Coppeta stated that there could be two houses on one lot if there are detached ADUs. The Building Code states that the minimum size for a dwelling is 600 square feet. FHA also has minimum size specifications.

Chair Killam stated that the Board needs to discuss creating housing opportunities specifically geared to workforce or affordable housing. First, the Board needs to decide if this is what residents want, and next it must decide how nice the ADUs need to be.

Member Ottow stated that there are a lot of older people in town that cannot afford to stay in their homes. Member Stewart stated that if someone has a bigger home and wants to create an ADU and rent part of their home they should be allowed to. However, he does not think the voters would accept it if more than one unit is created.

Chair Killam stated that whether there can be multiple units, the size of the ADU, and if it can be detached can be put to the voters.

The Board agreed that increasing the allowable square footage for an ADU would be acceptable to the voters. Alternate Coppeta suggested having the allowable square footage be a percentage of the size of the primary dwelling unit.

Chair Killam stated that duplexes are not allowed in Atkinson and asked if that can be discussed. To her, they are two similar dwellings that are attached. There is one on East Road, one on Walker Road and one on Providence Hill. They were all built before the regulations were enforced. There might be less than 10 in Town. Selectman Ex-Officio Baldwin stated that the regulation can be changed to allow detached ADUs as long as they meet the code. Member Stewart asked how a detached ADU could be allowed and not look out of place.

Alternate Coppeta stated that ADUs are allowed. The Board discussed design standards and zoning. Member Mahoney stated that duplexes might be acceptable because they are two similar houses together.

Alternate Coppeta recommended that if the Board moves forward with detached ADUs, zoning for accessory buildings and lot coverage in residential areas should be considered. The Board agreed that there are many considerations for detached ADUs. Alternate Coppetta asked if the Board would be able to recommend a zoning amendment allowing detached ADUs by March.

Member Stewart stated that increasing the size of the ADU from 1000 square feet is a good idea and agreed that tying the size of the ADU to the size of the primary dwelling is a good idea. Chair Killam stated that a builder and a realtor calculate the size differently. Selectman Ex-Officio Baldwin suggested that the language be changed to state that ADUs could be up to 1300 square feet. That would allow affordable housing. He agrees that zoning for detached ADUs would require more discussion. Chair Killam remarked that anyone can get a building permit for a two story, detached garage and convert part of it to a dwelling unit.

Ms. LaBranche remarked that regarding metal buildings, many people in the trades put up metal buildings as workshops. She asked if they could be converted to dwelling units. Member Stewart stated that there are two homes with 30x60 metal buildings on their frontage. Chair Killam requested that be discussed later. Ms. LaBranche suggested zoning requiring that the ADU cannot be in front of the house, it can be in line or behind the house. Member Mahoney suggested stating that it has be similar to the primary dwelling. Alternate Coppeta stated that design standards would be enforced by Code Enforcement or the Building Inspector. Chair Killam remarked that Code Enforcement does not follow up.

The Board decided that there is enough time to consider a zoning amendment to increase the square footage of an ADU before Town Meeting. Allowing detached units would require more discussion. Member Wainwright would like language stating that new construction be compatible with the design and materials of the existing structure. Ms. LaBranche recommended that building materials for the ADU and the primary dwelling could be different, but they had to be complementary.

Member Ottow asked if revisiting a warrant article regarding senior living could be put on the agenda for a future meeting. He also suggested two changes to the previous warrant article. On page 2 he recommended changing 100 units to 40. The Board agreed to have it put on the agenda for the workshop on November 1, 2023.

### **3. Discuss Change of Start Time for Planning Board Meeting**

The Board discussed meeting earlier. Chair Killam informed the Board that the original time for public hearings at 8:00 PM is contained in a document recorded 40 years ago. Chair Killam said that there are two times to consider, a start time for the workshop and a start time for public hearings. Vice Chair Turell stated that it makes sense to have them half hour apart. The Board discussed start times for the workshop and the public hearings.

**Vice Chair Turell made a motion to change the start time for Atkinson Planning Board workshops to 6:30 PM and public hearings to 7:00 PM beginning with the workshop meeting November 1, 2023. Member Wainwright seconded the motion. All voting members in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.**

### **Adjournment:**

**Member Wainwright made a motion to adjourn. Vice Chair Turell seconded the motion.**

Discussion: Ms. LaBranche requested to discuss her contract. Chair Killam informed her that it ends December 31, 2023. Ms. LaBranche will be at the November 1, 2023 workshop.

**Vote: 7/0/0. All in favor.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

The next Planning Board meeting will be a workshop meeting on November 1, 2023 at Atkinson Town Hall.