

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
PUBLIC HEARING
MONDAY, 10/9/2023**

APPROVED MINUTES

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Selectboard Members: Chair, Kristi Morris, Vice Chair Michael Martin, Walter Martone, and Crissy Webster were present in-person. Everett Hammond was absent.

Administration: Town Manager Jeff Mobus and Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne were present in-person.

School Board Liaison: Steve Karaffa was not in attendance.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that on September 11, 2023, the Board introduced and held the 1st review of 3 ordinances:

1. Amendment of the Blight Ordinance
2. Repeal of the Taxi Ordinance
3. Repeal of the Rental Registry Ordinance

Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that at that meeting the Board set the Public Hearing date and time for the 2nd Review of these ordinances for October 9, 2023, at 6pm and this Public Hearing has been properly noticed. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that all the materials related to these ordinances were included in the meeting packet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he added possible actions items for these ordinances in the regular Board meeting

immediately following this public hearing to the agenda if the Board wishes to act on the ordinances.

1. Public Hearing and 2nd Review of Amended Blight Ordinance

Walter Martone discussed that the amendment of the blight ordinance is to make it consistent with the vacant building ordinance so it would be looking at buildings in a similar way regardless of whether they're blighted or just vacant. Walter Martone added that we are also taking advantage of the newly approved item in our charter which gives us the ability to expand this ordinance to being townwide as opposed to in the past we have an ordinance that was just within 500 feet radius of any kind of school or a childcare center, noting that we had to have this special authority in the charter in order to be able to do a wider range. Walter Martone continued that now the conditions that someone can be cited for a vacant building can also be cited for blighted buildings.

Walter Martone that this amendment has been reviewed and our Planning and Zoning Administrator Chuck Wise, was very involved in the formation of this as well as our Town Attorney. Walter Martone added that all are comfortable that it is enforceable and clear.

Chair Kristi Morris noted that they are anticipating the opportunity to act on this at the Regular Selectboard meeting immediately following the Public Hearings. The Public Hearing on the Blight Ordinance ended at 6:05 pm.

2. Public Hearing and 2nd Review of Repeal of Taxi Ordinance

Walter Martone discussed that in consultation with Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne, they reviewed the existing Taxi Ordinance and concluded that for a number of reasons that it really is unnecessary. Walter Martone added that this ordinance is not actively enforced, it might actually be discouraging new taxi businesses from starting in town, and there are provisions of it that we can't even enforce such as doing background checks. Walter Martone

continued that they felt it was unfair, noting that our past taxicab provider spoke to the Board many times regarding the licensing process and lack of enforcement.

Chair Kristi Morris noted that this does not mean that we cannot have taxis in the future. Further discussion ensued that they would not need to get a business license or register as a taxi service with the Town Clerk.

Chair Kristi Morris noted that they are anticipating the opportunity to act on this at the Regular Selectboard meeting immediately following the Public Hearings. The Public Hearing on the Repeal of Taxi Ordinance ended at 6:08 pm.

3. Public Hearing and 2nd Review of Repeal of Rental Registry Ordinance

Walter Martone discussed that this ordinance was brought to their attention by the Planning and Zoning Administrator Chuck Wise. Walter Martone added that Charles Wise spoke to the Inclusion Committee because they were very interested in housing and they were interested in data relating to rental units, how to determine whether the units are or have been inspected, whether there are issues there, and how they might contact owners. Walter Martone continued that at that same time a piece of legislation was working its way through the legislature that Chuck Wise had been following closely. Walter Martone further added that Chuck Wise came to the Ordinance Committee and told them that the legislation had passed and was signed into law by the Governor.

Walter Martone discussed that this legislation was that the State is going to do the exact same thing that we had in our rental registry as far as the collection of data. Walter Martone added that some of it they already are doing as the State currently requires anybody who's going to have a rental unit to fill out all this information about potential asbestos and lead. Walter Martone further added that this new bill is going to go further and is also going to do something that we had wanted to do but never actually got into our ordinance, which is to do some inspections and to have a complaint resolution process where tenants or landlords could file complaints.

Walter Martone discussed that the State is already in the process of hiring someone from this region to do those inspections. Walter Martone added that if a town has their own Rental Registry in place, the State will not do it for them. Walter Martone continued that we want to take advantage of the staff of the State doing inspections and data, we need to eliminate our ordinance so that we're not duplicating. Walter Martone noted that everything we had in our ordinance was redundant with what the State has and we're going to be getting a better enhanced service and it's no longer our responsibility.

Sharon Ayer via Zoom inquired if the registry would capture people running Air B&Bs or rooming houses out of their homes or properties. Walter Martone responded that he believed it takes care of rooming houses but not Air B&Bs. Walter Martone continued that we continue to have rooming house provisions in our ordinances, so we handle them a little bit differently, noting that he wasn't sure that we do inspections. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant discussed that we have provisions for rooming houses and short-term rentals noting that there is a process for those. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant added that short-term rentals need to go through a review process through the Development Review Board. Walter Martone noted that is under our Land-use Ordinance as opposed to being under the ordinance they are proposing to eliminate.

Sharon Ayer inquired if people don't report that they're using their properties as Air B&Bs does the Town have any mechanism for capturing those. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant responded that we would have to do a search ourselves on Air B&B or be notified by someone of the Air B&B. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant added that in August of 2022 she did a search on Air B&B and determined where the properties were located that were advertising and sent letters to the owners to notify them of the short-term rental ordinance and process. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant further added that she found and notified 15 property owners on Air B&B and most of them went through the process, noting that the ones that didn't were on the fence as to if they really wanted to do Air B&B and decided not to continue their short-term rentals. Walter Martone inquired if there were enforcement actions

if they decided to keep doing the short-term rentals without going through the process. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant responded that they would be violating the ordinance if they refused to come into compliance.

Chair Kristi Morris discussed that they are still not sure to what extent the inspections at the State level will be, noting that they will likely not all be inspected annually at least at the start.

Sharon Ayer suggested that the review of short-term rentals would be valuable to do on a regular basis.

This item was listed on the agenda for possible action at the regular Selectboard meeting immediately following the Public Hearings.

No further discussion. The Public Hearing was closed at 6:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary