



Village of Stockbridge
PLANNING COMMISSION
June 05, 2025, UNAPPROVED MEETING MINUTES
118 N. Center Street ~ 517 - 851 - 7435

Call P.C. Meeting Call to order. At: 6:41 p.m.

Roll Call commissioners present : Laura Loomis, Jennifer Conant, James Johnson,
Daryl Anderson

Commissioner Absent: Amy Good Stockbridge Township/Village : Zoning Administrator Katrina Griffith, MPC.

Also in attendance: Mario A. Ortega, AICP- from McKenna, John Gormley P.C. Attorney and Village Manager Heather Armstrong

Motion to approve June 05, 2025, agenda by Jenifer seconded by Laura motion received unanimous approval by voice vote.

Motion to approve May 01, 2025, agenda by Jenifer seconded by Laura motion received unanimous approval by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment there were no public at the meeting.

Unfinished Business

Mario Ortega's Email

- A copy of Mario Ortega's email explaining color coding was provided.
- Mario Ortega invited all members to contact him directly to save time.

Article 6 Detailed Review

General Edits (Identified by Daryl)

- Previously missed dimensional changes were noted.
- Changes included:
 - Hours of operation for kennels.
 - Fencing requirements for self-storage facilities.
 - Another adjustment to hours of operation for kennels.
- Spelling issues were also identified for correction.

Event Halls/Banquet Halls (Principal Use)

- **Standards and Minimum Size:**
 - Event halls/banquet halls as a principal use in buildings must comply with specified standards. This applies to buildings or rooms not used by government entities, hotels, or civic places, which are exempt.
 - A minimum size of 3,000 square feet was proposed.
 - ****Rationale:****To ensure significant investment in the property (e.g., kitchens, amenities) and community, rather than simply renting out vacant buildings. This aims to prevent issues with private events not adhering to regulations like liquor control and hours of operation, which is more common with smaller, less invested spaces.
 - ****Consideration:****The 3,000 sq ft figure is arbitrary, based on success in larger communities, and may be too large for the village. It also aims to prevent overcrowding, such as a 1,000 sq ft space hosting 400 people.
- **Hours of Operation:**
 - Hours of operation are specifically called out to ensure adherence.
 - A balance is sought between accommodating smaller legitimate events (e.g., baby showers for 15-20 people) and preventing abuse by "bad actors."
- **Noise Ordinance Integration:**
 - The village's noise ordinance is a non-zoning, general ordinance. It should not be directly inserted into the zoning ordinance to avoid complicating the amendment process (general ordinances have simpler change procedures than zoning ordinances).
 - The times in the zoning ordinance (for event hall operation) and the general noise ordinance should align, but direct referencing is to be avoided.
 - **Proposed Language:**"Event spaces shall comply with all other applicable Village ordinances." This was found acceptable.
 - ****Current Noise Ordinance:****Prohibits noise from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.
 - ****Event Hall Hours:****Proposed as 8 a.m. to 12 a.m. (midnight).
 - ****Resolution:****Event spaces can operate from 8 a.m. to midnight but must comply with all village ordinances, including the noise ordinance. This means activities like outdoor patio use might need to cease at 10 p.m. even if the indoor event continues.

Kennels (Section 6-275 of Red Line)

- **Location and Districts:**
 - The question of which districts kennels will be allowed in was raised. Article 3 will ultimately define this; Article 6 focuses on operational standards.
 - Initial discussion considered limiting kennels to Industrial districts, moving away from residential mentions.
- **Setbacks:**
 - A 50-foot setback from residential properties is proposed.
 - ****Concerns:****50 feet may be too close for some, with 200 feet mentioned as a possibility. A balance is needed between protecting residential areas and not rendering adjacent commercial properties unbuildable for kennels.
 - ****Considerations:****The size and scale of the kennel are important. Smaller kennels (e.g., 10 dogs) on narrower village lots might not require a 200-foot setback.

- ****Potential Solution:**** Tiered setbacks based on the number of dogs (e.g., kennels with X number of dogs require a 200-foot setback).
- **Veterinarian Clinics:**
 - Veterinarian clinics often include kennels. A local example is next to the bank (downtown).
 - Strict kennel regulations could inadvertently force veterinarians out of downtown areas.
 - A distinction was made between large-scale kennels (e.g., Animal Blood Bank) and typical vet clinics with 6-10 runs.
 - ****Definition of Kennel:**** Any facility providing overnight boarding of animals.
 - ****Clarification for Vets:**** The stringent kennel standards should apply if a vet offers overnight boarding as a routine service (e.g., for vacationing pet owners), but not necessarily for animals requiring overnight medical care.
 - ****Proposed Exemption:**** Language to the effect of "This will not apply to veterinarian clinics that are providing care for sick animals" was suggested.
- **Operational Standards and Conclusion:**
 - Kennels will not be permitted in residential districts.
 - Strict standards include a 5-foot cement wall and a totally enclosed exercise area (with the outside portion having a masonry wall) to mitigate noise.
 - The consensus was that if kennels are not in residential districts, the proposed standards (with agreed changes) are acceptable. Heather (Village staff) reported no current complaints about dog barking.

Bed and Breakfast (B&B) (Section 6-269)

- ****Guest Capacity:**** Up to 10 guests allowed.
- **Parking Requirements:**
 - One off-street parking space per B&B bedroom, located in the side or rear yard.
 - ****Concerns:**** Potential for entire backyards to become parking lots, increased strain on neighborhood parking.
 - ****Existing Regulations:**** B&Bs must adhere to general parking standards (to be detailed in a separate parking article), which will require off-street parking on private property and address hard surfacing.
 - Minimum open space or maximum impervious surface rules are typically for larger parking areas but could be considered.
 - A maximum number of parking spaces for B&Bs (e.g., no more than 4 spaces for a 3-room B&B) could be set.
- **Enforcement of Stay Limits:**
 - ****Rule:**** Maximum stay of 30 days per year and 14 consecutive days per tenant.
 - ****Enforcement Challenge:**** Difficult to enforce without reporting requirements; current system is complaint-based.
 - **Alternatives Considered:**
 - Annual business licenses with reporting (deemed staff-intensive).
 - Clear definitions distinguishing B&Bs (transient stays) from Boarding Houses (indefinite stays), with vetting during application/intake.

- ****Legal Context:****Uses cannot be explicitly prohibited but can be regulated. Permissive zoning means unlisted uses are not allowed, but a relief process (ZA determination, then Planning Commission) must exist.
- ****Consensus:****Allow B&Bs with restrictions and rely on complaint-based enforcement.
- **Record Keeping:**
 - A previous ordinance requirement for B&Bs to "keep a list of the names of all persons staying... available for inspection by the zoning administrator" had been removed.
 - ****Debate:****Reinstating this provision.
 - Arguments for: Deters abuse, common practice for hotels.
 - Arguments against: Concerns about personal information (PPI), potential for circumvention.
 - ****Decision:****Section 6-269 F, requiring record keeping, will be reinstated.
- ****Licensing:****The concept of a business license for B&Bs was mentioned; this would be addressed in a separate ordinance.

Article 7 Detailed Review (Non-Conforming Uses, Signs mentioned generally)

Sign Authority and General Review Process

- A standardized review process was affirmed:
 1. Zoning Administrator (ZA) makes the initial decision/issues permit.
 2. If the ZA is uncertain or desires further input, the matter goes to the Planning Commission.
 3. If the Planning Commission deems it necessary, it proceeds to the Village Council.
- 2. The ZA is expected to consult with relevant Village personnel (DPW, Village Manager, Police Chief, etc.) as a team effort.
- 3. ****Action:****This review process needs to be clearly worded within the ordinances.

Non-Conforming Uses (Section 6-290, Page 95, B4)

- ****Expansion of Use:****Agreement that non-conforming uses should not be allowed to expand their footprint.
- **Structural Alterations:**
 - The current text prohibits a non-conforming use structure from being "enlarged, extended, reconstructed... or structurally altered."
 - ****Issue:****This could prevent an owner from moving an interior load-bearing wall within the existing footprint.
 - ****Proposed Change:****Allow interior structural alterations as long as the exterior footprint is not changed. The phrase "structurally altered" should be clarified to apply to *exterior* alterations or removed if covered by other terms.
 - ****Clarification:****Section 6-290 pertains to non-conforming *uses*, while 6-291 pertains to non-conforming *structures*. The principle of allowing interior alterations within the existing footprint should apply to both.

- **Decision:** Amend 6-290 to permit interior structural alterations for non-conforming uses, similar to provisions for non-conforming structures, ensuring no exterior expansion.

Reconstruction of Unsafe Structures (Section 6-291 E, Page 96)

- **Current Rule:** If a building official declares a non-conforming structure "physically unsafe and or unlawful" due to lack of maintenance, it cannot be restored, repaired, or rebuilt except in full conformity with current district regulations.
- **Concern:** An owner might be unaware of a maintenance issue (e.g., a hidden roof leak causing structural rot) that leads to an "unsafe" declaration. They should have an opportunity to rectify the problem.
- **Comparison:** Paragraph D of 6-291 allows restoration for structures damaged by fire or catastrophe. Paragraph E is stricter for deterioration due to lack of maintenance.
- **Building Official's Role:** The declaration of "unsafe" by a building official is a significant step, typically meaning the entire structure is compromised and usually involves efforts to work with the property owner.
- **Proposed Change:** Provide a timeframe for the owner to address the issues after notification by the building official before the structure loses its non-conforming status regarding reconstruction.
 - **Timeframe Debate:** Suggestions ranged from 30 days to 6 months to obtain a permit.
 - **Decision:** The owner must *apply* for a building permit within 30 days of the "unsafe" declaration and *obtain* the permit within 3 months to undertake repairs. This allows them to maintain non-conforming status for reconstruction purposes if they act promptly.

Voting on Articles

Article 6 Approval

- Motion to accept the first draft of Article 6 with all stated changes.
- Second: Jennifer.
- Outcome: Approved (3-1, Jim opposed).

Article 7 Approval

- Motion to accept the first draft of Article 7 with all stated changes.
- Second: (Implicitly Jennifer or Laura).
- Outcome: Approved (Unanimous).

Further Discussion Items

Cottage Industries

- **Jim's Concern:** Cottage industry provisions, as currently drafted, could effectively turn residential neighborhoods into light industrial areas. While home occupations are acceptable, expanded uses allowing employees, automotive repair, and boat storage are problematic.
- **Jim's Recommendation:** Eliminate the "cottage industry" category.

- **Path Forward:** This topic will be revisited in detail, likely when Article 3 (Permitted Uses and Zoning Districts) is reviewed. It will be a primary agenda item for a future meeting. The ordinance is a living document and can be refined.

Zoning Map and Future Land Use

Flexible Mixed-Use District

- The current zoning map reflects existing designations, with "Development" removed and a "Historic Storefront Overlay" added.
- The Master Plan's Future Land Use Map includes a "Flexible Mixed Use" category for certain outlying areas (identified by peachy/brown color on the map).
 - **Intent:** To allow for broader commercial categories, encourage diverse development, and provide flexibility for larger, revenue-generating projects (e.g., adult care facilities) in these areas.
- **Utility Planning:** Expansion of utilities (especially sewer) into these designated flexible mixed-use areas needs to be part of the capital improvement plan, considering the potential scale and type of development.
- **Implementation Approach for Flexible Mixed-Use:**
 1. A new "Flexible Mixed-Use" zoning district will be created with its own set of standards (distinct from the Central Business District, allowing for larger scale and mixes of uses on larger sites).
 2. This district will be added to the zoning ordinance, making it an available tool/option for developers. The Village can later initiate rezoning of specific parcels to this new district if desired.
 - **Target Areas:** M-52 approaching the Four Corners and M-106 from the funeral home towards the Four Corners are seen as suitable for this flexible mixed-use designation.
- **Action:** Mario will draft standards for this "Flexible Mixed-Use" district for inclusion in Article 3.

Housing Options and School Property Issue

- Discussion on identifying areas for different housing types.
- An R3 zoned area is near the school. A doctor's office was permitted on school property (zoned "Public").
 - **Concern:** This sets a precedent for allowing private commercial offices on publicly zoned land, potentially leading to future unintended consequences and requests for other commercial uses on public land.
 - The decision was made to address a short-term need but may create long-term zoning headaches.

- No immediate resolution, but the context is important for future zoning decisions.

NEW BUSINESS

- Next Meeting Date:**July 14th.
- Materials Delivery:**Mario to provide draft documents for the next meeting by June 30th (or July 7th at the latest).

Next Meeting Agenda

- Review black line (clean) versions of Article 6 and Article 7 incorporating approved changes.
- Primary focus: Review and discuss Article 5, specifically **Signage**(substantial rewrite).
- If time permits, review **Lighting**standards (also part of Article 5).
- Defer detailed review of Article 3 (Zoning Districts, Permitted Uses, including Flexible Mixed-Use and Cottage Industry placement) until more use-specific standards (like signs, lighting) are established.

Action Items for Staff/Consultant (Mario)

- Prepare and distribute black line versions of Article 6 and Article 7.
- Draft standards for the new "Flexible Mixed-Use" district for Article 3.
- Prepare a draft of Article 5 (Signage and Lighting) for review.
- Incorporate agreed-upon changes into Article 6:
 - Reinstate Section 6-269 F (Bed and Breakfast record keeping).
 - Ensure kennel standards reflect discussions (e.g., vet clinic clarification, if not already captured).
- Incorporate agreed-upon changes into Article 7:
 - Amend Section 6-290 (Non-Conforming Uses) to allow interior structural alterations within the existing footprint without exterior expansion.
 - Amend Section 6-291 E (Reconstruction of Unsafe Structures) to include a timeframe for owners to apply for (30 days) and obtain (3 months) permits for repair.
- Wordsmith the general review process (ZA -> Planning Commission -> Village Council) for clarity in the ordinances.

Action Items for Planning Commission

- Review provided materials thoroughly before the July 14th meeting.
- Prepare for in-depth discussion on Cottage Industries at a future meeting (it will be a primary agenda item).

PUBLIC COMMENT

- The chair failed to ask for public comment but there wasn't any public at the meeting to make a comment.

P.C. COMMENTS CONCERNS OR SUGGESTIONS

- The Chair did not ask for P.C. Comments or suggestion as it was very late in the evening and everyone was tired .

ADJOURN

- Motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. by Jame second by Jennifer . Motion received unanimous approval by voice vote.

NEXT MEETING

- Next regular scheduled meeting of July 03, 2025, is being rescheduled to July 14, 2025, because of the Fourth of July Holiday.

Minutes prepared and submitted by P.C. Chair

Full meeting transcript available by request