

## DRAFT MINUTES - Heath Planning Board Meeting

Town of Heath

Planning Board

Via Zoom

July 16, 2025, at 7:00 pm

Meeting called to order by the Chair at 7:00 pm

### ATTENDANCE:

Douglas Mason - Chair

Cindie Garland – Boards Clerk

Bill Fontes

Peter Charow

Meghan Rhodes (FRCOG/CPHS)

### Short Term Rental FRCOG Presentation

- Megan Rhodes from FRCOG provided a comprehensive overview of short-term rental regulations and their impact on Franklin County communities.
- Current Status in Heath: Five registered short-term rental units as of 2022.
- Four non-owner-occupied units (whole house rentals). One owner-occupied unit (room or garage rental). Only four units currently active on Airbnb/VRBO platforms
- Regional Context: Franklin County has seen a 10% increase in short-term rentals since 2022. Most concentrated in Charlemont, Deerfield, Greenfield, Shelburne, and Ashfield
- Revenue Potential: Towns can impose up to 6% local excise tax on short-term rentals. Conway (6 units) earned \$5,000 in 2024. Sunderland (6 units) earned \$12,000 in 2024. 16 of 26 Franklin County towns have imposed local taxes.
- New State Requirements for New Short-Term Rentals (2024): Full sprinkler system installation required. ADA accessibility standards compliance. Annual health and safety inspections. Owner must have a 1 million liability insurance policy.
- Registration with Massachusetts Department of Revenue
- Cost Implications: Estimated \$300,000+ for new ADU construction. Additional \$50,000-\$75,000 for septic system upgrades. Approximately \$20,000 for sprinkler system. installation. Accessibility modifications including ramps and accessible entrances.
- Potential Restrictions:
  - Prohibiting corporate ownership of short-term rentals
  - Limiting number of units per owner
  - Requiring owner-occupied units only
  - Capping total number of permits in town
- Board Consensus: General support for implementing the 6% local excise tax. Preference for preventing corporate ownership while allowing local homeowners to supplement income. Recognition that new state regulations may naturally limit new applications

## **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) Update**

- Planning board previously agreed to all town counsel suggestions except retaining specific definitions (local and restricted use).
- Bill will forward the revised ADU bylaw to town counsel through the Selectboard for final review and explanation of any remaining objections.
- Discussion about potential use of ADUs as short-term rentals and whether additional restrictions are needed

## **Subdivision Regulation Update**

- Tabled until next meeting when full board can participate.
- These regulations can be adopted by the planning board without town vote.

## **Other Updates**

- 5G and Wireless Regulations: Passed over due to time constraints.
- Solar Bylaw Review: Will suggested changing regulations from wattage-based to surface area-based criteria.
- Large Battery Backup Installations: Research needed on potential regulations for commercial-scale battery storage facilities.
- Zoning Bylaw Cleanup: Cindie will consolidate all definitions into Section 9 and remove duplicates throughout the document.

## **Previous Meeting Minutes**

- Doug led a review of previous meeting minutes from June 4th, 2025.
- Doug made a motion to approve the minutes. Bill moved. Peter second. All in favor, Doug “Aye”, Peter “Aye”, Bill “Aye”. Minutes passes unanimously.

## **Next Meeting Scheduling**

- The board agreed not to have an August meeting due to conflicts. Next Planning Board meeting will be held on Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **Adjournment**

- Doug made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 pm. Bill Moved. Peter Second. All in favor, Doug “Aye”, Bill “Aye”, and Peter “Aye”. The meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm with unanimous approval.