

Planning Board

**Town of Chelsea
Planning Board**

**Public Hearing for the Cabins in the Woods Project on Togus VA
At Chelsea Town Office
December 19, 2016 at 7:00 pm**

Members Present: Nate Grant
Maria Jacques
Palmer Sargent
Andrea Smith
Jared Heath
Hank Mastrianno

Public: Bryan Sites, Volunteers of America
Melissa Morrill, Volunteers of America
Jessica Lowe, Kennebec Journal

1. Call to order

The hearing was called to order by Andrea Smith at 7:03 pm

2. Overview of project

Andrea Smith provided a recap of the multiple steps of review the Planning Board had already undertaken for the Cabins in the Wood project (see project overview and timeline). Over the past month, it was discovered that formal subdivision approval was needed by the Town of Chelsea. Therefore, public notice was given of this hearing as required by law.

3. Public comment

Andrea Smith asked for public comment. There was no comment.

4. Adjournment

The public hearing was closed at 7:14 pm.

Cabins in the Woods Project Overtime, Timeline and Planning Board Review History

Proposed Project: The proposed Cabins in the Woods project is to construct permanent housing for male and female homeless veterans and their families. The project consists of 21 cabins, 16 one-bedroom cabins and 5 two-bedroom cabins and one community cabin which will have laundry facilities, etc. The project is proposed to be constructed on South Road on the Togus Medical Center campus, in Chelsea. The land is owned by Togus. The Volunteers of America (VOA) of Northern New England will own the cabins and provide oversight to the complex. The project has been before the Planning Board, beginning in February of 2016. The project's targeted completion date is the Fall of 2017.

February 2016: Chelsea CEO brought Cabins in the Woods project to the attention of the Planning Board. The CEO requested the project lead provide plans in order to review them and provide recommendations. Project architect to send 50% plans, to CEO, once complete.

April 2016: 50% plans were provided to Town on April 28, 2016. CEO reviewed plans and made recommendations to PB on May 7, 2016 via e-mail.

June 6, 2016: The VOA provided revised site plans to CEO as a result of their meeting with MaineHousing.

June 13, 2016: Julia Wilcock of VOA provided a detailed overview of Cabins in the Woods project at PB meeting. The VOA indicated they would send the town 75%, 90% and 100% plans for the project. (See PB meeting minutes for more details)

July 11, 2016: PB discussed presentation from June meeting and focused on next steps. Select performance standards/criteria will be discussed at August meeting then sent to VOA. CEO also coordinating a site visit, for PB and Board of Selectmen, with VOA for August 8th. (See PB meeting minutes for more details)

August 8, 2016: PB and Board of Selectmen members did a site walk with Julie Wilcock of VOA. 90% plans reviewed, PB completed preliminary plan review and performance standards, communicated results to CEO to determine if further action needs to be taken (See PB meeting minutes which include PB review notes for more details)

August 15, 2016: 90% design plan findings letter sent to VOA from PB.

October 2016: CEO reported that 2 of the 3 items referenced in the 8/15/2016 findings letter had been addressed (waste disposal system and marking stream boundaries). Remaining item was potential impact of enrollment of children, who would be living in cabins, on the local school system. PB Chair to follow up with superintendent of schools.

Cabins in the Woods Project Overtime, Timeline and Planning Board Review History

November 2016: Brian Sites and Melissa Morrill of VOA provided update to project. Howard Tuttle, RSU Superintendent was to participate by phone, but was tabled to December. PB chair to follow-up with Superintendent with questions from board regarding town's obligation to pay for children associated with project.

December 2016: Communication from VOA to town regarding need for subdivision approval for the Cabins in the Woods project, from Town, for purposes of VOA being able to close on project construction loan. PB had been of the understanding their approval was not needed for this project due to it being located on federal land. The PB was advised, by the Town's attorney, that the project does require local approval. A notice of public hearing was published on December 12, 2016, to meet the 7-day notice requirement, for the December 19, 2016 hearing.