

**Alton Planning Board  
January 31, 2008**

**Draft until approved by the Board**

**Worksession  
4:00 p.m. Alton Town Hall**

**Approved Minutes**

Members Present: Bruce Holmes, David Hussey, Tim Roy, Scott Williams and Bill Curtin as Selectmen's representative.

Other's Present: Fire Chief Alan Johnson, Sharon Penney- Planner and Jennifer Fortin-Secretary,  
Meeting called to order by B. Holmes at 4:00pm.

B. Holmes – this meeting was to talk to the Fire Chief over the cisterns.

S. Penney – The Chief had mentioned several months back that he would be happy to come and talk to us about cistern systems and since we have had that come up as part of an issue for subdivision criteria from time to time, I think this is a good time to do it. There were a couple of issues here, I don't know how we want to start, just an overview or a historical overview, which of course I am not overly privy to because I wasn't here.

B. Holmes – There are two issues, one is whether we can do this or not. Can we force people to do a cistern?

S. Penney – Because of the validity of the ordinance or the ordinance that is pending.

D. Hussey – And where the cut-off is on the size of the development for each one.

S. Penney – I have got some back ground information on this. Scott correct me if I am wrong and Chief you to because I could be wrong, I believe that the issue came up in 2004 regarding cisterns, Bill you might even know also, 2004 regarding cisterns, I am assuming that was predicated on the fact that there was a lot of subdivisions coming in.

D. Hussey – Can you tell us where they came from and who is making us do this.

S. Penney – We can do that.

D. Hussey – I would like a little back ground of where they all came from and why we are going with this type of system as opposed to something else. I am not a Fireman and I know nothing about Firemen. These systems I am looking at, I am kind of why would we go with this type of system as opposed to a dry-hydrant or a fire pond or making people go get leases.

A. Johnson – Leases for what?

D. Hussey – Leases to go to ponds or easements or why this over those?

A. Johnson – Let me give you a little back ground of where I started from with this. When we had a major growth issue in town with subdivisions blowing up all over the place, we started to have issues with not having an available water supply. The hydrant systems only goes down to the community center at the old Railroad station in the Bay and the other way it goes to the traffic circle, so other than that we need to bring water with us and have a water source readily available. There is not a lot of people that want to give up leases or give up property that give us access to the lake, where we can drive a fire truck down there. A dry-hydrant only gives you a maximum lift capacity of about 15 feet above the surface of the water. Without having a real reliable water source out in the area and the size of the homes as they were growing in square footage we started looking at alternate water sources. A dry-hydrant we can only lift 15 feet roughly, it is an average figure you can get on a real brand new truck and under ideal conditions not having back to back bends in the pipe and that type of thing. You can get 16 feet to 17 feet but they use 15 feet as an average. We kind of looked at Timber Ridge, which was done by a previous administration when they built Timber Ridge. When the Planning Board got involved with Timber Ridge Development because of the way the driveways were constructed, access to the water we didn't have. The previous Chief worked with the Planning Board to get residential sprinkler systems installed in the houses but we still needed a water source to supply the trucks out that far and they put a 10,000 gallon cistern in the ground. As we started developing on Alton Mountain and Alton Shores, all these other areas where the town is developing and growing we started looking at subdivisions and came up with a guideline roughly to say that anything 5-lot subdivision or greater we would like to see a cistern installed. I brought it originally to the Board of Selectmen to talk about and we had done a lot of research to pick up the NFPA requirements for cisterns, we looked at other communities that had cistern ordinances. This one I brought to the Board back in June 2004, which was the original time we did it, was a draft which was actually taken from the Town of Gilford and when I brought it to the Board of Selectmen we looked at it and discussed it and they thought there was too much hydraulic information in there, in other words calculations, and they just wanted to trim it down so we did. NFPA requires or suggests a cistern be 30,000 gallons minimum for the square footage of the average size homes now and the fore loads and the plastics and all the other stuff that is in it if you don't have a residential or municipal water source, which we don't outside of the hydrant district. Outside the downtown district we don't have any. In talking to some of the contractors there are a lot of people building and developing around the lake single family homes and projects over on Damon Drive and places like that and one woman offered to give us to put a dry-hydrant in, which would be in Robert's Cove, that is fine except she is 75 feet above the water level. You can't do it, it is not going to work, 15 feet maximum. So we came up with some, we said alright lets look at 10,000 cisterns as a starting point, 5-lot subdivisions or greater and work it from there. That is what I did and passed it back onto and the Board of Selectmen eventually we are going to turn it back to the Planning Board for review and look at it to see how it is going to fit in with the Town Ordinances and all the other stuff that went along with the Planning Board requirements, and that is where it is now. We have just been going on and any 5-lot subdivision I request it.

T. Roy – On the NFPA doesn't it say, isn't it either/or sprinkler.

A. Johnson – You can have anything, and Scott Williams tried to do a dry-hydrant on his subdivision and it got shot down using the marsh over on Route 140.

T. Roy – I am talking about a sprinkler system either/or as opposed to just that.

A. Johnson – Yes you can.

T. Roy – I don't know whether the cisterns are to just get water spread around the town. Let's say someone is going to do a 5-lot subdivision, would they have the option of either putting a cistern in or put a sprinkler system in at the house.

A. Johnson – Yes they do. There are options, you can do a dry-hydrant or a fire pond or a cistern. They can have other options, yes, but most of the subdivisions do not have access or we are restricted by wetlands and all of the other stuff or we don't have access to a year round fire pond.

D. Hussey – All of these options are offered to them and available.

A. Johnson – They are available, yes.

D. Hussey – A long as they meet your specs.

S. Williams – Where is this proposed ordinance? We have a thing from the June 19, 2006 meeting here and it says enclosed is a draft policy that was printed by the Fire Chief.

A. Johnson – The one I have here Scott, which I gave to the Board of Selectmen.

S. Williams – Does it state in there that they have these options or is it just read cisterns?

A. Johnson – I believe it does, yes.

S. Williams – My questions was, I never read the ordinance.

A. Johnson – It never made it that far it was never adopted.

S. Williams – I just asked the Chief if it had the language in there that says either/or a fire pond, cistern or sprinkler.

A. Johnson – They talk about a drafting base, dry-hydrant, municipal water supply for the protected properties, yes it is in here. It gives them the option to do that and it talks about the vehicle pads for placement of the vehicle so they don't fall off the road at the end.

B. Curtin – Now is that NFPA that you are reading from?

A. Johnson – This was taken out of it yes, it is excerpts from the NFPA Rural Water Supply Program, and I can get you the whole book if you would like, copies of it. It was something we put together as an interim to try and get water sources out there where we are developing these houses. We have houses our ladder truck won't reach the third floor windows. In what used to be a 2 ½ story home is now a 3 story home and they are putting egress windows on the third floor attic space and putting a stairway up there with kids game rooms up there and with the extended driveways and the extended garages on the end of it, if you calculate it our ladder truck falls 6 feet short of reaching the windows. We need to do something and there are residences, businesses and buildings in town that have installed sprinkler systems.

S. Penney – Chief, I am just curious, how much does a sprinkler system cost? I realize it is based on square footage.

A. Johnson – It is going to depend on the type of system and the contractor.

T. Roy – It is about \$5,000 for the average house.

S. Williams – I came up with \$7,000 for a 3,000 square foot house for the Woresbo System.

D. Hussey – Was that the tank and everything?

S. Williams – No this was done in conjunction with a domestic water supply.

A. Johnson – That's what the ones down on Timber Ridge are.

S. Williams – About \$250/sq.ft. is a good rule of thumb maybe \$300 on the high side.

S. Penney – But that begs the question of an artesian well and everything else to have capacity unless you have town water.

S. Williams –The heads have to maintain a flow

A. Johnson – 1 ½ gallons per minute for residential.

T. Roy – Depending on the size of the house there is a reservoir.

A. Johnson – Usually they are 500 gallons depending on the average home.

S. Penney – What about balancing cost like a 5-lot subdivision versus a \$30,000 cistern.

S. Williams – The Woresbo system there is no water reservoir tank it is strictly off the domestic system, there is no storage tank at all with that system.

A. Johnson –It is like using plastic pipe that sticks together.

S. Williams – It is tied in with your domestic water system.

A. Johnson – they have to do pressure tests and air tests to calculate the flow it has to be an engineered system.

B. Holmes – Do they have to test this on an early basis?

A. Johnson - No

S. Williams – Just for the occupancy you need the flow test.

B. Holmes – There was a comment about insurance companies not liking that because kids were playing with it.

S. Williams – There is no savings to the insured for any of these systems.

A. Johnson – The only thing is if you increase your water sources whether it be a municipal water system and you extend it out and keep it growing and add it to the system or you include cisterns or get a tank truck, these all add up to helping your ISO rating, which is what the insurance companies look at as far as the insurance ratings.

S. Williams – Sprinkler systems are not made for extinguishment they are made to keep it manageable until we get there.

S. Penney - We tried to do as much research on the minutes as possible to see where this ended up.

D. Hussey – There are obviously places you could use a dry-hydrant, down near my pit, I have brooks running everywhere.

S. Penney – Are we looking for an ordinance or are we looking for the criteria justification leading up to an ordinance. It says in the Selectmen’s minutes from March 2005 “this should have been looked at by Town Counsel and Town Engineer”.

A. Johnson – I received this back from CMA for a 30,000 cistern.

S. Penney – According to the minutes of June 2006 “Before any final policy is adopted the Board agrees to send the policy to the Select Board and the Planning Board for there review and recommendations”.

A. Johnson – Well this is where we are and I submitted what I think we ought to be looking at. They have the options and I will be a little more specific when I do my plan reviews to allow them to do this. They either have to put a cistern in or look at a fire pond or something of that sort.

B. Holmes – Is there relief, is it time to take a look at the town as an overall picture and say these are the areas we are lacking, if you have a dry-hydrant within a ¼ mile and a cistern on the other side of you. At this point do we have the authority to make somebody put these in? We don't have an ordinance that would stand up in court.

A. Johnson – It is a condition.

B. Curtin – We haven't adopted anything and we can't force anybody to put them in. It is not a request it is a recommendation and that is all it is. We don't have to take anyone's recommendations unless it is a safety issue.

B. Holmes – If you get a proposal now and it is recommended what are we going to do?

T. Roy – The Board doesn't have to accept it.

S. Williams – I see it as more of an overhaul source than a fire fighting source. I think they are being sold as a life safety issue and I don't think they are. There has been no looking at solid water sources around town such as ponds and streams. I think the sources of water would be much more usable.

D. Hussey – If you go down Route 28S there are a lot of water sources down there.

B. Holmes – When do the cisterns and ponds come under the town's care?

A. Johnson – We don't accept them for 2 years, they go through a 2 year cycle of freezing and thaws.

B. Holmes – Who cleans them out?

S. Williams – Is there a maintenance plan?

A. Johnson – I would have to look but we dump a gallon of Clorox down them.

S. Williams – What we would need would be to get the town water system to expand.

D. Hussey – It wouldn't take much to identify water sources that we could use.

S. Williams – I was told UNH would map it. We should look at all of the options.

S. Penney - I think in the interim you need to come up with an interim policy.

A. Johnson – This was put together as a draft and we can tear it a part and do whatever it is you want to do to it.

D. Hussey – Should we put a committee together to explore different options and then in the spring start mapping out where things are.

B. Curtin – When I was talking to Attorney Sessler on this, the Planning Board can require them to put a cistern in, sprinkler system or whatever.

S. Penney – According to Russ, this first 2004 version of this proposed draft ordinance was approved by the Fire Wardens, who were subsequently disbanded in 2005.

A. Johnson – I have been to the Board since the Fire Wardens.

B. Holmes – In 2006 it was headed to the Planning Board and I have never seen it.

B. Curtin – What about these people we told need to put them in but haven't even started their subdivisions?

T. Roy – It is a condition of approval, what do you do?

B. Holmes – They would have to come back to the Board and have it taken off their conditions.

A. Johnson – I think we need to do something for water sources in our out lying areas which we didn't have before.

B. Curtin – We could do a warrant article to start a Capitol Reserve Fund for the expansion of town water but then it would have to be the Water Department because they are independent of the town.

B. Holmes – What about doing a radius around the water areas we have? Who fills the cisterns?

A. Johnson – We try to get the owner to do it if not we do it as a training exercise.

B. Holmes – Are these things locked?

A. Johnson – Yes they are now.

B. Holmes – Because that becomes somebody's liability the owner or the town.

A. Johnson – Up until yesterday we had not locked them because somebody has to carry tools to get into them.

T. Roy – What do we do about the conditional ones that aren't in?

B. Curtin – I think each one is going to have to be looked at independently because if there is going to be a safety issue than you will need something.

J. Fortin – Are you as a Board asking us to go back and find out which subdivisions have not put their cisterns in?

S. Penney – We are going to have to and do an inventory.

B. Holmes – We need to take a look at this ordinance as a board

S. Penney – Chief can some of the trainees or someone start pulling together some information on what is where as far as you know?

A. Johnson – you mean water sources?

S. Penney – Water sources, existing cisterns, something so we can start transferring to maps so we can get an idea.

D. Hussey – Hydrants also.

J. Fortin – We need to have an ongoing updated list as to where everything is so when a subdivision goes in front of the board they can pull the book out and see how close the subdivision is to a water source.

A. Johnson – Do we keep going the way we are?

B. Curtin – Keep doing it the way you are it is up to the Planning Board to choose to use it or not.

S. Penney - Just to let you know I want to pull a public forum together, Cindy suggested this, on the upcoming Shore Line Protection Act Amendments and get one of the girls to come up from DES. I do want to get Attorney Sessler up here for his annual talk, and get working on the Master Plan Chapters.

**Motion made by B. Curtin to adjourn at 5:20pm, seconded by S. Williams. Motion passed with all in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Fortin  
Secretary



