

Planning Commission
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday September 28, 2020 7:00 PM

Planning Commission Members Present:

Paul Tillman
Fred Kowalik
Howard Beach
Michael Todd
Chris Whidden, Zoning Administrator

Members Not Present: Tyler Harwell

Online Attendees: Sven Federow, Nikita Lenihan, Jason Rasmussen

- 1.) Call to Order by Chair, Paul Tillman at 7:00 pm
- 2.) Agenda Review – September 28, 2020

No changes

- 3.) Comments from Chair and Land Use Administrator

Paul Tillman wanted to note that the next 2 meetings have scheduled hearings for bylaws, 10/12/20 and 10/26/20.

Chris Whidden wanted to make the Planning Commission aware he would be submitting a petition for increasing the administrative fees for the Zoning. He will provide a new fee schedule to the Planning Commission at the next meeting on October 12, 2020.

- 4.) Comments from Citizens regarding items not on agenda.

No comments from Citizens.

- 5.) Approval of Meeting Minutes 8-24-20 and 9-14-20

Motion to approve made by Michael Todd
Howard Beach -2nd
No Discussion
Vote – unanimous

Motion to approve made by Michael Todd
Howard Beach -2nd
No Discussion
Vote – Unanimous

6.) Site Plan Review – Mr. Gary Brown – Parcel 11-02-05 – 790 Drumlin Road Perkinsville, VT

Resident was not present for the meeting. There was not sufficient documentation for the Sketch Plan Review. Paul Tillman recommended that Chris Whidden reach out to Gary Brown and let him know the Planning Commission needs additional information.

Chris Whidden will review the Plat Checklist with the information that has been received and let Mr. Brown know what will be needed to get the application and checklist ready for the hearing scheduled on October 12, 2020.

7.) Discuss “Town Plan” review and update. Guests: Sven Federow, former Land Use Administrator to discuss history; Jason Rasmussen to discuss survey of citizens.

Sven Federow noted that one of the priority items was to create some sort of concrete aesthetic standards for the solar siting and combining that with some sort of bylaw.

One of the bylaws Sven suggest looking at again to see if it can be simplified is the Deer Wintering Habitat bylaw.

Jason Rasmussen agreed with Sven regarding the deer habitats and noted that there is a new standard for habitat and forest blocks areas. There are new State laws that want Towns to look at large existing blocks of forest land and connections between them. This is Title 24, Section 4348A. (Note this is the Regional plan)

Jason also suggested revisiting the revitalization discussion for the Town.

8.) Changes to the Zoning Map

- a. Review results from past survey results collected from Town Revitalization and Outreach surveys and meetings.

Jason Rasmussen presented the Town of Weathersfield Survey from November 2016.

See attached PDF with results

Discussion was had about the types of business, rentals, etc. that people have suggested for the Town and how its incorporated into the changes that the Planning Commission is already trying to do.

Nikita Linehan “Weathersfield has to be inviting for the business owner. They have to feel supported and wanted. I feel a few businesses that were here in the past did not feel supported by the Town Officials, even though the townspeople did support them. They were very sad to see them go. I’ve mad numerous suggestions to make Weathersfield more inviting and bring folks from other towns in and see what a beautiful town we have and what we have to offer. We’re going to be looked at as the little town nestled in the valley that is residential only. Nothing happens here in Weathersfield for others to come other than Wellwood and a few gas stations.”

Paul Tillman said that he has heard the town doesn’t like small businesses. He would like to see facts and find out where this is coming from as they are trying to get businesses in.

Sven Federow suggested some sort of mixed development.

It's not all about the town and townspeople allowing stores and big businesses to come in, some of that falls on the State guidelines.

Howard Beach said he would support something like a "mixed use" zone. For example, if a grocery store had apartments above it.

Nikita Linehan "As a small business person, it takes a lot of effort on my part to bring business to me because I am nestled in a little town that is just residential as people are concerned. "What goes on in Weathersfield?" "Are you serious? That happened in Perkinsville? It's just a little residential town." So being a small business it takes a lot of effort on my part to get the activity that I have in my business. Is there somebody in this Town that's job is to drum up business? Because Ascutney 4 Corners or Downer's 4 Corners would be an amazing spot for a local (in audible). That would give people a reason to want to be here. I don't want to have to travel all the way to Springfield, or all the way to Windsor. I don't even want to do that being the business person, that is a long way for me to go. It's not that far for when you're a business person? It is far and for families who are coming all the way out to Downer's 4 Corners to me, they don't have time to go back to Springfield. They don't have time to go to Ludlow or Windsor to do the shopping and the banking and all of that. There seems like there should be somebody to drum, maybe it could be just an ad, just offering that up."

Michael Todd let Nikita know that he is the Economic Representative on the Select Board. It is his job and that is what he is working on. Mike is looking at the map and where they can increase density for housing and businesses.

Jason Rasmussen wanted to remind the Planning Commission this survey was done 4 years ago so put that in perspective.

Chris Whidden let the Planning Commission know that since he took office, there has been a lot of permits coming in.

- b. Review the proposed changes to the Village Designation – keeping the 1 acre or ½ acre. Do you want to keep the village area that we have or create a separate village zone?
Tabled for another meeting.
- c. Review designations and boundaries for – tabled for another meeting
 - i. Hamlets
 - ii. Highway Commercial
 - iii. Industrial

9.) Discussion of Items for Future Agendas

Items discussed above.

10.) Any other business that can be legally discussed –

None

11.) Adjourn

Michael Todd made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Howard Beach– 2nd

No discussion

Vote - unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 8:56 PM

Next Planning Commission Meeting is scheduled for Monday October 12, 2020 at 7:00 pm at Martin Memorial Hall.

Respectfully,
Chauncie Tillman
Recording Secretary