

Planning Commission  
Martin Memorial Hall  
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT  
DRAFT of Planning Commission Meeting Minutes  
Monday June 8, 2020 7:00PM

Planning Commission Members Present:

Paul Tillman  
Michael Todd  
Howard Beach  
Fred Kowalik  
Tyler Harwell  
Chris Whidden, Zoning Administrator  
Brandon Gulnick, Town Manager

Online attendees: Nikita Lenahan, David Fuller

- 1.) Call to Order by Chair, Paul Tillman at 7:00 pm
- 2.) Agenda Review – June 8, 2020  
No changes to agenda
- 3.) Comments from the Chair and Land Use Administrator:

Paul Tillman turned the meeting over to the Town Manager to read the following statement:

“On Friday, March 13, 2020 Governor Phil Scott issued an executive order to declare a state of emergency in Vermont in response to COVID-19. On March 30th the Governor suspended certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. Open Meeting Law Requirements under Act 92 include the following:

Whenever a public body holds a remote meeting, it must:

- 1) Use technology that allows the public to attend by electronic means;
- 2) Allow the public to access the meeting by telephone whenever feasible;
- 3) Include and post information on how the public can access the meeting electronically;  
and
- 4) Record their meetings, if it is a meeting of a legislative body, unless circumstances make it impossible for them to do so.

Over the past month the Town has made a good faith attempt to adapt to COVID-19 and provide Weathersfield residents access to meetings. We purchased a new laptop outfitted

with a web cam and microphone we thought would work well for virtual meetings, however, I received several complaints that board members could not be heard and it was difficult to converse back and forth. Last week Mike Todd and I tried diligently to improve this by setting up external microphones, but we were unable to make it work.

We have many important projects were working on and hearings that need to take place. It's imperative that the public have access to these meetings to give input on the subject.

One important hearing that was scheduled to take place tonight was to hear public comments on the adoption of proposed Zoning Bylaw amendments submitted by petition exempting fire processing. To improve our virtual capability we ordered an enhanced camera and speaker phone that provides access for any resident wishing to attend meetings virtually. We are now well equipped to hold this hearing and future virtual meetings to conduct town business. With that said, our Land Use Administrator, Chris Whidden, warned the Public Hearing to hear public comments on the adoption of proposed Zoning Bylaw amendments submitted by Petition exempting fire processing on June 22, 2020 at 7:00PM.

I want to welcome comment from Weathersfield residents on this topic and others as we move forward with our new system to hold adequate public meetings.

Thank you,”

Brandon Gulnick

Discussion was had regarding having the meetings available on SAPA and the best way to do that, whether they record our live feed or if we record the meeting with the new technology and send it to SAPA for them to upload. Brandon Gulnick will review with SAPA.

Paul Tillman asked about the status of the Reed hearing.

Chris Whidden said that the hearing has been warned for June 22, 2020 at both Post Offices, the Town website and has been sent via certified mail to all parties. Brandon Gulnick also noted that it will be posted in the bulletin board at Town Hall on 6/9/20 once the bulletin board has been installed.

4.) Comments from Citizens regarding items not on this agenda:

Nikita Lenihan made a comment “Having the meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> is well and good, but all comments need to be addressed, you can't pick and choose.”

5.) Approval of Meeting minutes from May 11, 2020 and May 26, 2020 meetings –

May 11, 2020 Meeting Minutes (Corrected)

Michael Todd made the motion to approve the corrected minutes

Howard Beach – 2<sup>nd</sup>  
No discussion  
Vote – unanimous

May 26, 2020 Meeting Minutes  
Michael Todd made the motion to approve the corrected minutes  
Fred Kowalik – 2<sup>nd</sup>

Discussion:

Michael Todd asked about the status of the preferred site letter.  
Paul Tillman reviewed with Chris Whidden, it has been signed and has been sent with the paperwork that was discussed at the last Planning Commission meeting.

Michael Todd noted line 101 change the wording to “That position would be welcome at the Planning Commission meetings at the request of the Energy Coordinator or by the request of the Planning Commission.”

Vote to approve minutes with changes - unanimous

6.) Discussion of unnatural structures and property aesthetics –

Chris Whidden wanted more clarification as to what the Planning Commission wanted researched regarding this topic.

Specifically, they would like the following looked at as unnatural structures and property aesthetics:

- Cell Towers
- Solar Panels
- Wind Mills
- Junk Yards

7.) Zoning Bylaw Updates:

- a. Conservation of Natural Resources bylaw- Riparian buffers – Fred Kowalik asked about the importance of the Riparian buffers. Howard Beach gave the history as a reference and will send some information to Chris Whidden to research and prepare information for the next Planning Commission meeting.
- b. Changes to Zoning Map – Jason Rasmusson created large laminated maps that can be written on with dry erase markers and over lays to make changes to the current land maps. Paul Tillman asked Chris Whidden to please research if surrounding towns split property lines.  
Paul Tillman asked what would happen if someone’s property was zoned a certain way when they purchased it and then the zoning changed? Chris Whidden noted that the property would be grandfathered.  
Planning Commission continued their review of the map with suggested changes.

- c. Evaluation of and possible changes to definitions in zoning bylaws – tabled until next meeting. Chris Whidden to send out updated definition sheets for review.
- d. Status Spreadsheet Review – currently up to date.

8.) Discussion of items for future agendas –

Warn Planning Commission Meeting for June 22, 2020 for 6:45 PM

Agenda Items:

- 1.) Call to Order
- 2.) Agenda Review – 22, June 2020
- 3.) Comments from the Chair and Land Use Administrator
- 4.) Comments from Citizens regarding items not on this agenda
- 5.) Reed hearing 7:00 PM

Michael Todd made a motion to go into executive session to discuss legal issue

Howard Beach 2<sup>nd</sup>

Vote – unanimous

Return from executive session 8:56 PM

9.) Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Michael Todd

2<sup>nd</sup> by Tyler Harwell

No discussion

Vote – unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm

Next Planning Commission Meeting is scheduled for Monday June 22, 2020 at 6:45 pm at Martin Memorial Hall.

Respectfully,  
Chauncie Tillman  
Recording Secretary