

Planning Commission
Martin Memorial Hall
5459 Rte 5 Ascutney, VT
Planning Commission Meeting
DRAFT Monday, May 23, 2022 6:30 PM

Planning Commission Members Present:

Paul Tillman
Howard Beach
Joseph Bublat, Online

Michael Todd and Tyler Harwell tried to connect to the meeting. Due to technical difficulties at the Town Hall they did not reconnect to the meeting.

Ryan Gumbart, Land Use Administrator

Attendees: Patti Arrison, Todd Hindinger

1.) Call to Order made by Paul Tillman, Chair at 7: 12 pm.

2.) Agenda Review

None

3.) Comments from the Chair and Land Use Administrator

Paul Tillman apologized for the meeting starting late due to technical difficulties.

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

None

5.) Approval of Meeting Minutes –May 9, 2022

The Recording Secretary asked that these be tabled until the next meeting due to the incorrect draft being submitted.

Howard Beach made a motion to table the minutes from 5-9-22 until the next meeting.

Joseph Bublat – 2nd

No discussion

Vote – unanimous

6.) Town Plan – Energy section update

Paul Tillman did provide some background regarding the Town Plan Energy section for the people that were in attendance at the meeting. These include deciding if the Planning Commission wanted an enhanced energy plan, solar arrays, reviewed the scenic views, etc.

Howard Beach made a motion to table the Energy section update to the next meeting due to Jason Rasmuessen hasn't had a chance to complete the draft.

Joseph Bublat – 2nd

No discussion

Vote – unanimous

7.) Town Plan – General

Paul Tillman would like to get a structure and timeline for the other sections of the Town Plan. The Town Plan needs to be reviewed every 7 years. He would like to review the other sections and see what people's thoughts were, where we needed to change things in the Town Plan or not.

Ryan Gumbart said it was adopted May 1, 2017 and asked if it needed to be adopted by May 1, 2025.

Paul Tillman asked Ryan Gumbart if there were any other sections that the Planning Commission should be concentrating on. At this time Ryan has not gone through it, however, when he does there may need to be some changes.

Ryan Gumbart asked if they should start with the Land Use section, the Planning Commission could review it and then come back at the next meeting with questions.

Paul Tillman would also like to look at housing. Howard Beach said that they have attempted with the wording that they have come up with in the bylaws changes to address some of that. He knows the State passed a law that said that any property owner has the right to an accessory dwelling unit.

There was discussion if someone could have a camper on their property while they are building their house. Ryan said there are temporary permits, in the bylaws there are provisions for a temporary permit that may be issued for 1 year for non-conforming uses or non-conforming structures incidental to construction projects.

The Town Plan will continue to be on the agenda for continued discussion.

8.) Bylaws – 2nd Round Updates

Patti Arrison asked about the map that goes with the Town Plan is that for the Town Plan that was adopted in 2017 or is it anticipating the Town Plan for 2025.

Paul Tillman explained that it was taking the map that was already voted in, the Future Land Use Map, reviewed it with Regional Planning, made modifications to the Village area and it was submitted to the Selectboard. If approved it will be the current Land Use Map.

Patti Arrison asked “when you say voted in, do you mean voted in in 2017?” Howard Beach said it was voted in in 2017 to be the new Land Use Map and it just hasn't been sent in for the approval of the Selectboard because of updating all of the bylaws that go along with it and the changes that have been made.

Patti Arrison asked if they expanded the size of the Villages. Paul Tillman said that they expanded some a little and moved a little. Paul Tillman provided some examples of the areas that are expanded and moved. He offered to show the maps.

Howard Beach talked about the State trying to increase density in Towns. They are trying to push for more development in the cities. The problem that VT runs into is most of the Towns don't have sewers and you can physically have the density. By having 1/2 acre lots in areas that are appropriate is addressing the density issue.

Patti Arrison asked Howard Beach if the State was asking him to do 2 incompatible things, but her impression is that it's not coming from the State its right hear. Howard said the States goal is to make more affordable housing. The way to get more affordable housing is to reduce the lot size and to increase the density.

Patti said that point she is trying to make may not be the Planning Commission's problem, but the Selectboard's problem, but we cannot evade or avoid the lack of municipal sewer and water in the Villages. That is what limits our ability to offer affordable housing. She feels that the Selectboard are digging in and saying "no" but she feels that the Town Plan could be a way to encourage them to say "yes". She doesn't know as much about the ARPA funds as others, but thinks we could use some of that money for the feasibility study.

Paul Tillman asked Patti if she felt that Towns should help people with their private septic. She does not feel they should help with individual tanks, but if there are multiple septic tanks failing in the Village then there needs to be an answer on a Municipal level.

Paul said he doesn't know what a feasibility study would cost for Town septic, but they must have to pay an Engineer to come and determine the feasibility of having a municipal septic and look at the Springfield/Perkinsville side and the Windsor/Ascutney side. Based on conversations with those Town Managers they are not going to do that. So, he thinks the next study that would happen would be "what would it take to have something in Town", that could be an option but he thinks it will be so expensive. Patti said that they need to know that.

Todd Hinderger said on this specific point he would say that when this first started, he sent a 1-2-page letter to the Town Manager regarding the issues. The idea of centralizing waste water treatment, the Regional Planning Commission are all on board with it. The planning for that, how you actually make it happen, and in the case of Ascutney they have certain advantages. His letter said "this is what you could do" set up a decision tree for the Selectboard. You start going through to find out what you can or can't do and then based on that you would decide "Ok the Selectboard has made a decision, we want to investigate these centralized systems for Ascutney and for Perkinsville. He said it would cost about \$1,200 to get a thoughtful decision process to the Selectboard.

Howard Beach gave an example of a development where they had a communal septic system where each house has their own septic tank, but had a common leach field. The State had been hesitant to have something like that in the event something fails you have a much larger problem. This is something Howard was discussing with Terry.

Todd Hinderger said that there were 2 things, one is that it is part of the State process, we have rules specifically to address communal systems and the nuance is a decision about ownership, which the Selectboard would make.

Paul Tillman said there was good discussion and he would be open to discussing a feasibility study. He then turned the meeting back to the Bylaws. He asked Howard if there were questions on the map. Howard said there were questions on the difference between the proposed Land Use Map and what we are proposing before the Selectboard. The biggest change that he can recall is that they expanded the Village area. Ryan Gumbart said he was meeting with Jason and Otis on Wednesday to get more background on how they came up with the proposed.

Paul Tillman said that Ryan had asked some very specific questions at the Selectboard meeting about some State statutes keep land together or not together. Paul had not heard that before. He wanted to know if this was something the Planning Commission needs to discuss further. Ryan said it was fairly new to him as well, it is Act 171 that addresses forced fragmentation in parcelization. It asks you to identify forest interior blocks. It defines that as 500-acre area of continuous forest land. Paul asked what breaks it up. Ryan said development does.

Paul Tillman asked if there were additional questions regarding the bylaw update. Ryan said there were quite a few questions. He asked if they remembered updated bylaw with color coded sections. Ryan said anything highlighted in red, like Section 5.13 – conditional use review. It talks about applications shall include the following:

- Application forms
- Site plan project narrative

This is not currently in the bylaws.

There is also section 5.14 on PUD review and all that basically tells the Administrator and Zoning board how to go through stuff like that.

This will need be submitted to the Selectboard later as it was not in the draft that is currently with them.

There is also a large section on flood hazards and a section on planning new development. Paul Tillman suggested to do what they did last time, let's get them listed and printed out and in front of the Planning Commission and go through them one by one and create a "next round."

Todd Hindinger asked when it would be appropriate to bring up the questions he had mentioned at the Selectboard meeting; in another meeting, in the red-line version of the bylaws for the 2nd round, etc. Paul recommended that he make a list of specific questions to bring to the hearing. Todd said that wasn't his questions, he had brought up a couple of points and he wanted to know the best way to put it in for the 2nd round. Howard said it would be best to bring them up in the hearing and then it will get sent back to the Planning Commission. He can also put a list together and send them to Ryan and get them in a packet.

9.) Highway Access Policy – tabled for the next meeting.

10.) Zoning Permit Application – Amendment/Extension – tabled for the next meeting.

11.) Discussion of Items for Future Agendas

- Continued bylaw discussion
- Zoning Permit Applications
- Highway Access Policy

12.) Any other business that can be legally discussed

None

13.) Adjourn

Howard Beach made a motion to adjourn at 8:47 pm

Joseph Bublat – 2nd

No discussion

Vote - unanimous

Next Planning Commission Meeting is scheduled for Monday, June, 13, 2022 at 6:30 pm at Martin Memorial Hall.

Respectfully,
Chauncie Tillman
Recording Secretary

Planning Commission

Howard Beach, Vice - Chair

Joseph Bublat, Clerk

Tyler Harwell, Chairperson

Paul Tillman, Chair

Michael Todd, Chairperson