

PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes

August 2, 2017

Members Present: Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Jeff Bendis

Members Absent: Michael Pacht, Two Vacancies

Others Present: Ben Pauly, Michael Malik, Michael Brands

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Michael Malik was introduced as a Planning Commission candidate.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The June 7, 2017 minutes were approved as presented.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Village Zoning Regulations Amendment

The Planning Commission Public Hearing per 24 V.S.A. Section 4441 in regards to a proposed amendment to the Village Zoning Regulations.

Chair Miller read the proposed change to the Village Zoning Regulations. In Section 109 Definitions, the following phrase is to be removed from the Bed and Breakfast definition: “and involving not more than one full time employee”.

The change was requested by an attorney representing the sale of a grandfathered B&B that contains nine guest rooms. Current B&B regulations restrict B&Bs to three guest rooms. The attorney felt that more than one employee would be required to operate a nine guest room B&B.

There were no comments from the public concerning the proposed amendment. The PC agreed to pass the amendment onto the Board of Trustees. The Trustees would schedule a required public hearing per 24 V.S.A. Section 4442. The earliest Trustees hearing date could be September 12, 2017.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Integrated Agriculture

The Town Planner distributed the August 2nd single page version of an amendment to the

Town Zoning Regulations that would create an Integrated Agriculture overlay zone. The changes are based on discussions taken at the July 5, 2017 PC meeting.

Mr. Pauly, director of Kelly Way Gardens, participated in the discussion.

The intent is to allow agricultural events at the Kelly Way garden site, while postponing broader coverage of the entire Town. This is a model regulation that could be changed as necessary once the future uses and issues are understood.

The regulation would be an overlay zone. A map of the overlay was shown.

The PC read and discussed each item of the proposed amendment language at length.

In Section 109, the text was changed from “adjacent to” to “owned by”. “Inn” was corrected to “Integrated” in two instances at the end of the definition.

In Section 401, the text was changed from “adjacent to” to “owned by”.

In Section 532 A. 3., the words “is limited to 400 square feet” were added to the end of “Retail sales of products related to the products produced on site”.

In Section 532 A. 5., the word “venue” was removed twice, dinner and wedding were made plural, and “principally” was added in front of the word “produced”.

In Section 532 B. 1., “outdoor” was added in front of “evening”.

In Section 532 B. 4., “outdoor” was added in front of “evening”.

In Section 532 B. 4., “Attendance” was changed to “Transport”.

In the last sentence of Overlay Zoning Map (Map to be printed), “Inn” was corrected to “Integrated”.

After additional discussion, Ms. Boston motioned with a second by Mr. Segal to accept the proposed Integrated Agriculture amendments as discussed above. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote.

The Town Planner will post a public hearing notice for the PC’s September 6, 2017 meeting.

B. Town Plan Energy Chapter

Chair Miller and other PC members met with TRORC’s Chris Damiani and Kevin Geiger and the Sustainable Woodstock Energy Committee on Monday July 10 to discuss potential changes to the Town Plan’s Energy Chapter. Chair Miller emailed a digital version of the Town Plan with the TRORC amendments and comments highlighted. TRORC was under a deadline to deliver the materials to the Town of Woodstock. The

Town can now take its time reviewing and approving the proposed changes.

The changes are important, as they would allow the Town to participate in Act 249 alternative energy reviews with the Public Service Board.

The Town Planner read the changes and felt the changes would be acceptable to Woodstock. A more difficult issue is the adoption of maps which list potential sites for the various forms of alternative energy. The proposed sites would allow for “commercial” installation of alternative energy production. Residential applications do not require a PSB “hearing”. Receiving neighborhood approval of the various potential energy sites may be a difficult task.

TRORC has produced a series of maps. At the next meeting the PC will start a review of the various maps.

C. Re-appoint Acting Administrative Officer - Phil Swanson

A lengthy discussion on appointing an Acting Administrative Officer to fill in when the Town Planner is absent was continued after a failed vote. Mr. Segal felt a person with adequate planning and zoning knowledge should be appointed to the position, he suggested that Renee Vondle as the P&Z assistant would be a better candidate.

The Town Manager has filled the position for the past 28 years. Very few permits or other official actions have been taken by the acting official during this time. The need is only for emergency situations when a person is unable to wait a possible two week period. Town employee vacations are limited to a two week period of time.

D. Start Village Zoning Rewrite Discussion

The Town Planner noted the Town and Village Zoning Regulations are reviewed after adoption of the Town Plan. State law requires that master plans and zoning regulations be compatible, therefore this creates the necessity of a review every five years or so. Until July 2016, Town Plans were rewritten every five years, the updated law now requires an eight year Town Plan cycle. The rewritten Town Zoning Regulations were recently adopted by the Selectboard and become effective August 8, 2017.

The Village Zoning Regulations were last adopted in June 2010. There have been five amendments since then; 2014, 2015, 2016 and two in 2017.

The Town Planner read a short list of potential topics for discussions. He asked the VDRB to note areas of concern as well. Signs are always the biggest issue in the Village. The Design Review Board is concerned with street furniture, color, and landscaping issues. Parking in commercial zones, electric charging stations, sidewalk expansion, and stormwater drainage are site plan items. Noise and exterior lighting are residential concerns. Maintenance of property and destruction by neglect are becoming an issue. Most recently, chain stores, franchise businesses and unattended gasoline service have

been topics of discussion at VDRB meetings. Numerous applications requesting expansion of existing uses in a riparian zone have been heard by the VDRB in the past two years. The 100' riparian buffer covers a large area in the densely populated Village.

Mr. Bendis asked if other Vermont communities have dealt with the issues noted above. If so, what have these Villages written as a regulation. It would be a good idea to contact VLCT and TRORC for model regulations that could be adopted to Woodstock's needs.

The Town Planner will distribute his short list as a starter package that should generate additional discussion for the September meeting.

E. PC Vacancies

There are currently two vacancies. Keri Cole resigned her PC membership last week. She will continue to serve on the VDRB and the Board of Trustees. The PC thanked Ms. Cole for her services to the community. There are four candidates being interviewed by the Trustees and Selectboard for the two vacancies. By the next meeting in September, the PC should have a full commission with seven members.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION

A. Housing Study

A recently initiated informal Housing Study Group has been formed. Chair, Sally Miller; Town Planner, Michael Brands; Town Manager, Phil Swanson; TRORC Executive Director, Peter Gregory; House Representative/EDC, Charlie Kimball; Selectboard member, Sonya Stover, and developer, David Sleeper attended the first meeting. The intent is to create a housing study that would establish a data base on local and area housing stock and potential need. A housing study prepared by TRORC had been completed in 2005. This was before the creation of Stafford Commons in West Woodstock. Suggestions were made to make this a regional study. The majority of people who work in Woodstock live outside of Woodstock. The Woodstock Union School system's area of coverage was mentioned as a possible area for study. A key need in Woodstock is housing for the lower 40% of the economic scale - "work force housing". However, federal funding is mainly geared to the lower 20%, making it very difficult to fund needed work force housing.

Mr. Kimball has written a simple one page "request for proposal" to get the issue started. The Town of St. Johnsbury has recently completed a housing study, and serves as a model.

Should other PC members wish to be involved, please contact Chair Miller. The Town Planner will keep members up-to-date with future progress.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for September 6, 2017.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner