

PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft Minutes
February 3, 2016

Members Present: Sally Miller, Susan Boston, Nick Scheu, Lowell Gray, Keri Cole, Sam Segal
Members Absent: One Vacancy
Others Present: Michael Brands

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 6, 2016 meeting were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Town Zoning Regulations Rewrite

The Town Planner distributed a handout containing proposed amendments.

The regulations currently do not have a definition of riparian. The Town Planner transformed a riparian discussion taken from a Public Forests Riparian Guidelines brochure. The PC reviewed the definition and made minor changes before approving.

The Town Planner added two sentences to Section 524 Ponds and Pools that would allow infinity type ponds per suggestions from the last meeting. "Construction of ponds where the water level is less than two feet below dam/berm shall require a conditional use review. An engineer's report shall show proof of adequate stormwater containment."

After further discussion of Section 524, the PC removed all references to pools. The section will review pond construction only. There have been very few pools constructed in Woodstock and no issues with pools over the years.

Section 525 Short Term Rentals was discussed at length. A quote taken from the Town Plan and inserted in the preamble was removed. The first sentence requesting that Short Term Rentals are restricted to an applicant's residence was removed.

The preamble was divided into paragraphs. The first of which states: "The Town recognizes the benefit of Short Term Rentals to home owners, community and visitors. It is important not to create a nuisance or change to the residential character of the area. Home owners have the responsibility to obtain liability insurance and to register for the Vermont rooms and meals tax."

The two criteria requiring insurance and rooms and meals tax registration were relocated to the preamble, note above.

A totally new section, Generators/ Heat Pumps/ AC, was reviewed. Generators have become very commonplace since Tropical Storm Irene. Heat pumps in the past few years are also becoming very popular. Central air conditioning is replacing window units. All of these are generally placed outdoors and can be an issue if one has a close neighbor. The section requires the items to be placed so as not to be seen from the public view, to meet setback, to be screened and to be placed in front yards. An exemption via a Conditional Use review would be allowed. The section was reviewed and approved.

Section 404 F. Design Review - Minor Application allows a permit to be issued administratively, following a Design Review approval, for certain design elements. This has worked very well in the Village for minor items over the past four years. The South Woodstock Design Review Board meets a tenth as much as the Village Board. The section was approved as presented.

Section 820 Reconsideration/Rehearing is a totally new section that had been approved at the January meeting.

Chair Miller asked about changes to Section 530 Waiver to Setbacks. An additional criteria, building into the setback could be allowed only if the applicant is able to prove there is no other option available was discussed. The Town Planner will write this up and present it at the March meeting.

The Town Planner added two short lines to the Stormwater regulations that references, in one case, the Vermont Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Simplified Sizing Tool for Small Projects. The referenced 63 page guide is an excellent source for low impact development devices such as rain gardens, impervious surfaces, gravel swales, etc. which are used to control stormwater runoff.

The Town Planner has done some research into illumination levels for digital signs. The issue is fairly complicated as most regulations refer to the difference in the ambient light level from that of the actual sign illumination. The luminance level (L_V) is the candella per square meter (cd/m^2). This is commonly referred to as a "nit". Fortunately, there is only one digital sign allowed per regulation, that of the high school. Additional research will be conducted to hopefully find a simple solution to the digital sign illumination level issue.

For the March 4th meeting, the Town Planner hopes to have the State's River Corridor model bylaw ready for review. The bylaw covers flood hazard and riparian issues as well a water body's movement within its channel.

The final item of the Town Zoning Regulation rewrite will be a review of potential changes to the zoning map.

B. Discuss RFP for East End Developer Package

Chair Miller discussed the RFP for the East End Developer Package. This had been emailed to all members earlier. The Economic Development Committee is the driving force behind the RFP. The EDC will pay a consultant up to \$12k to put the package together. The money is generated from the 1% rooms and meals tax rebate program. The intent is to use the package to

entice development within the East End that would be beneficial to the Woodstock community.

IV. OPEN DISCUSSION

A. Siting of Solar Facilities

The Solar Siting Ordinance was discussed. The 20 page final report from the Solar Siting Committee was emailed earlier. The report essentially kicked the can down the road with the Public Service Board refusing to budge on their total control of the solar permitting. This leaves the issue of screening unresolved. After discussion, the PC felt it best to proceed with the proposed rewrite of the Selectboard's Solar Siting Ordinance. It was mentioned that the Town of Middlebury has adopted a Solar Siting Ordinance. The Town Planner will look into this. The TRORC was also mentioned as a possible source for information.

B. Wetland Amendment Update

The Town Planner noted the Select Board adopted the proposed Wetland Amendments on January 12, 2015. This was done to correct the language in the regulations which mistakenly allowed work in a wetland but not in the buffer area.

C. Village Snow Dump

The application for the State Wetland Permit was recently submitted for the proposed Village snow dump project. Due to the small lot size and elongated shape, snow would be stored in the buffer area. The wetland is a sloped seep area. The buffer area proposed for development flows to the west away from and not into the wetland. Snow would be stacked no more than three feet deep. Once the State approval is issued, the Village hopes to proceed with the local permitting process.

D. Energy Action Network

Chair Miller noted that next Monday February 8th, the Energy Committee will host the Energy Action Network, a non-profit community energy dashboard session. The meeting will take place at 5:30 pm in the Town Hall.

IV. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for March 2, 2016 at 7:30 pm.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner