

PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes
September 6, 2017

Members Present: Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Jeff Bendis, Sara Stadler, Eric Goldberg
Members Absent: Sally Miller
Others Present: Ben Pauly, Michael Brands

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Segal called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

The two newest members were introduced, Ms. Stadler and Mr. Goldberg.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The approval of the August 2, 2017 minutes was continued.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Town Zoning Regulations - Integrated Agriculture Amendment

A public hearing per 24 V.S.A. Section 4441 was held in regards to a proposed amendment to the Town Zoning Regulations, Integrated Agriculture.

Vice-Chair Segal read the proposed change to the Town Zoning Regulations. The amendments include a definition of Integrated Agriculture to Section 109, add an overlay zone under Section 408, have standards of review in Section 532, and an overlay zoning map delineating the 88.9 acre Kelly Way parcel.

The change was requested by the Woodstock Inn to allow agriculturally related events to take place at the Kelly Way farm site. The amendments are specific to the Kelly Way site.

Kelly Way is a large garden area, that grows food mainly for the Woodstock Inn's kitchens. The amendment is proposed as an overlay zone, with a text for required standards of operation.

The amendment is intended to be a model regulation which could be expanded throughout the town.

Mr. Bendis noted that two phrases are used in subsection A. "on the farm" and "on site". He suggested using one phrase throughout the document.

After discussion, the PC agreed to change “on site” to “on the farm”. The Town Planner will make the changes.

Mr. Bendis questioned the limit of 20 events per year.

The Town Planner stated the limit is based on the original application the Woodstock Inn had submitted early this year. Events were requested to run from May thru September or 20 weeks. The application had been denied due as the “agriculturally related event” was not an allowed use.

Mr. Pauly, Kelly Way manager, agreed that 20 events would work for their intended use.

There were no comments from the public concerning the proposed amendment.

On a motion by Mr. Bendis with a second by Ms. Boston, the PC agreed to approve the changes noted above and pass the amendment onto the Selectboard for the final public hearing.

A public hearing per 24 V.S.A. Section 4442 could be scheduled as early as October 17, 2017, the date of the Selectboard’s October meeting.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Village Zoning Rewrite Discussion

The PC reviewed the Town Planner’s list of proposed changes to the Village Zoning Regulations. The items are issues that come up during VDRB and DR reviews, administrative permitting, and general discussions with the public. The list is not finite and the PC was asked to add items as they come up. The PC did a preliminary review to determine if items merited future discussion or should be dropped.

In 2015 the Design Review regulations were rewritten to fortify the regulation of window shutters following an unsuccessful court challenge.

The issue of street furniture has resurfaced this year, with the Trustee’s distribution of picnic tables throughout the Village and a number of patio applications. The DR feels street furniture for commercial or community use should be reviewed before being placed. This would not include private use of outdoor furniture. A simple fix would be to add outdoor furniture to the list of items to be reviewed under Section 405 B.1.g.

Landscaping has been an ongoing concern of the DR, especially within the public view such as streetscapes. Landscaping can be used to screen unsightly or secondary architectural elements. Landscaping along the street, especially trees, can establish a long site line that ties a neighborhood together. It was also suggested that native plants be encouraged.

Surface materials used for patios, driveways or sidewalks has been a point of discussion. Stone walls and items above the ground are reviewed, however it has been a policy not to

review items placed flush to the ground. Various materials are used in constructing flat surfaces. Hardpack, gravel, native flat stone, cobblestones, bricks and asphalt are the most common.

Whether or not to add color to the list of reviewable DR items is discussed at every zoning rewrite. There have been a few instances of bad color choice over the past 25 years, but the issue is not considered serious enough to warrant regulation. Regulating color is extremely difficult as there is an infinite choice of color and innumerable shades available.

After deliberation, the PC agreed surface materials and color did not merit further discussion.

Parking in the rear of buildings is required only in the Light Commercial district which runs along Pleasant Street from Tribou Park to Richmond's Corner. Parking in the rear creates a more pleasing front facade as cars and other vehicles do not block the view of a front lawn or building elevation. Retail and restaurant operators generally prefer to have cars park out front to show a busy and thus popular enterprise.

Electric chargers are being placed in a few areas of the Village. This is a future energy source and should be encouraged. More and more electric vehicles are traveling to Vermont and are owned by Vermonters. A standard could be developed requiring that chargers be placed per so many spaces.

Adding sidewalk extensions for new or substantially renovated businesses could be required where there are none. The south side of Pleasant Street and the East End properties are two areas that should have sidewalks.

Paved driveways create stormwater issues as the owner is not able to reshape a driveway once a hard surface is applied. Before paving, a review could take place to assure proper stormwater controls are in place.

Stormwater standards have been adopted in the Town Zoning Regulations and should be added to the Village version. The Town Planner prepared a document based on the 2015 model created by VLCT. The five page document will be reviewed at a later date.

Riparian buffers have been a difficult review process for the VDRB. A good portion of the water bodies flowing through the Village are developed. The current 100' buffer, measured from the top of the bank, includes numerous homes and other buildings. Renovations of these structures is difficult if one is not allowed additional impacts within the buffer area. This issue will require a lot of thought. One remedy may be use of the State's River Corridor language which sets certain parameters for grandfathered structures. The Town Planner will continue to look into this.

The PC stopped at "signs" and will continue the preliminary review at their October meeting.

B. Town Plan Energy Chapter

Prior to the August meeting, TRORC prepared amendments to the Town Plan relating to the enhanced energy chapter required per Act 249 were distributed. Act 249 refers to the Public Service Commission's (PSB) review of alternative energy projects. By adopting the amendments and having them approved by the PSB, the Town earns the right to participate in PSB reviews as an interested party. A key to adoption and acceptance by the PSB is to include maps which designate potential sites for the various forms of alternative energy. The Sustainable Woodstock Energy Committee (SWEC) is reviewing a series of maps prepared by TRORC, both for potential energy sites and for publicly amenable sites. The SWEC review will continue this month with a report to the PC scheduled for the October PC meeting.

The Town Planner will be meeting with Kevin Geiger, TRORC planner, to discuss progress in other TRORC towns regarding the Energy Chapter adoption process and potential changes in legislation at the State level.

C. Local Housing Study Update

This item was continued from the August meeting. The housing group has not met since their first meeting earlier this summer. After discussion, Ms. Boston agreed to work with the Local Housing Study Group, once they become active again.

D. East End Plan Review

This was continued to the October meeting as the consultant was unavailable for the September meeting.

E. Re-appoint Acting Administrative Officer - Phil Swanson

The discussion was continued from the August PC meeting, at which time the Town Planner was requested to ask the Zoning Assistant, Renee Vondle, if she would accept the Acting Administrative Officer's position. She declined, noting there would be too much pressure on her to sign permits when there was no urgency on the applicants' part. The Acting Administrative Officer only signs permits when the Administrative Officer (AO) is out of town for a long period of time, such as a two week vacation and only when there is a perceived urgency. There is no need for the Acting Officer to sign permits when the AO is out for short leaves of absence, two to three days.

After additional discussion, Mr. Bendis motioned with a second by Ms. Boston to approve Town Manager - Phil Swanson as the Acting Administrative Officer for a three year period per State Statutes. The motion was approved with a 6-0 vote.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION - None

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for October 4, 2017.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner