

PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft Minutes
November 29, 2017

Members Present: Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Jeff Bendis, Eric Goldberg, Sara Stadler

Members Absent: None

Others Present: David Beilman, Frank O’Connell, Barbara O’Connell, Bettyanne McGuire, David McGuire, Mary McVey, Robert Hutchinson, Michael Brands

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 1, 2017 meeting were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. 200 Westerdale Road, LLC

The board discussed the request to amend the town regulations to rezone 3 acres of an 8.09 acre parcel owned by Mr. & Mrs. O’Connell on 200 Westerdale Road from Residential 5 Acre (R5) to Residential One Acre (R1). The request was continued from the previous meeting. The PC asked Mr. Beilman, representing the owners, to present evidence of neighborhood support for the proposal.

Four neighbors, Mr. Hutchinson, Ms. McVey, Ms. McGuire and Mr. McGuire, attended the meeting.

Mr. & Mrs. O’Connell, owners of 200 Westerdale Road, asked the PC to rezone an 8.09 acre parcel. A map of the proposed zoning was shown. The entire parcel is currently zoned Residential Five Acre (R5). The owners would like to convert the lower southernmost 3 acre portion of the lot to Residential One Acre (R1). The remainder of the lot, 5.01 acres, would retain the R5 zoning.

The O’Connells sent an email out to the neighbors asking for support of the proposed rezoning. Only two responses were received, both were supportive.

Michael Trotsky has sent emails to the Town Planner, indicating that the issue needs further discussion and that he was not yet ready to support the proposal.

Both the O'Connell and Trotsky emails were forwarded to the Planning Commission by the Town Planner.

Ms. O'Connell asked if all neighbors need to show support for the request.

The PC spoke of the previous proposal earlier this year to rezone the BS/LI zone to a residential zone. During that discussion, it was very evident that the majority of the neighborhood was against the proposal. Therefore, the PC withdrew the proposed rezoning. If strong opposition to the O'Connell proposal is noted, the PC would not want to rezone the property.

It was noted the current request is different from the previous proposal. The earlier request mainly evolved from a proposal to remove the commercial designation of an adjoining property.

The O'Connells purchased the property to improve the area. Ms. O'Connell wants to make the property more conforming and to limit their financial exposure. She wishes to move the issue forward and asked what the next step in the process would be.

The PC stated that a warned public hearing would put the issue front and center. Opponents to the change would have a chance to present their opinions at the hearing.

The next potential hearing date would be January 3, 2018. If the neighborhood shows significant opposition, the request could be denied by the PC. This would end the process. If the PC approves the request, it would be warned for a second public hearing with the Select Board at a future date.

Mr. Bendis suggested that a compromise situation may exist with a Residential Three Acre zone as it falls between the one and two acre zoning districts.

Chair Miller noted this would create a spot zoning issue and also does not address the owner's situation.

After further discussion, Ms. Boston motioned with a second by Mr. Bendis to schedule a Public Hearing for January 3, 2018 per State Statutes Title 24 Chapter 117 Subsection 4441 to amend the zoning map as requested. The motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

The Town Planner will place the ad and send notice to the abutting properties.

B. Town Plan Enhanced Energy Chapter

Chair Miller led the discussion. She is a member of the TRORC energy committee and as director of Sustainable Woodstock has been very involved in energy matters.

The rewritten Energy Chapter as prepared by TRORC is 90% acceptable. There needs to

be a slight bit of tweaking to fit the needs of Woodstock. The Town Planner will review and edit accordingly.

The proposed maps that are part of the rewrite need to be reviewed and confirmed by the PC. The State statutes require three levels of concern to be noted. The highest level is to chose sites that the Town prefers to be developed for alternative energy facilities. The second level is constrained locations, areas that may need some sort of review or may have special conditions attached. The third level is prohibited areas, where no alternative energy development should occur.

The Town Planner displayed the five proposed energy maps prepared by TRORC earlier this year.

Chair Miller added a map based on a Scenic Ridgeline study done a few years ago. This map showed areas that are visible from the public roads. She suggested that the five proposed maps should be compared with the view shed map. If a site is too visible, it could be removed from consideration.

The map of solar sites showed that most proposed sites are highly visible.

The wind map due to Woodstock's elevation and topography had few highly ranked sites. However, most of the sites would be visible as they are located on the top of hills. One thought is to have all wind energy proposals go through the current Scenic Ridgeline review process for approval before being certified by the State PSB. This would be a constrained site category.

Chair Miller felt that all energy systems could be massed together. One would still need to review the various sites for potential neighborhood conflict and public visibility.

Preferred sites could include parking lots, brown fields, areas disturbed by power lines, town owned land, etc.

Constraints could include setbacks or screening requirements.

The issue of visibility from and impact on Route 4 was mentioned. The current Select Board ordinance creates a no-development 1000' buffer from Route 4. This is far too restrictive and would not be upheld by the PSB.

Development on the back side of a ridge, out of site, could be a possible factor.

Should alternative energy be allowed in all commercial sites?

The PC asked a number of questions that can be answered by TRORC. What is the cut-off point for a solar farm or commercial generator? What does RAW on the maps stand for? If a woodchip-fired electrical generator were proposed, would the Town be allowed to review it as a commercial property per Conditional Use criteria. Traffic, noise and smoke would be key issues.

The PC was asked to read the proposed energy chapter and to think about where sites could be located or what series of constraints could be set. The conversation will continue at the next meeting.

C. Village Zoning Rewrite

The Town Planner noted he had received feedback from John King, Lincoln Street, concerning the multi-family housing regulation proposal. Mr. King asked that the PC not be too restrictive in their regulations as housing is needed in the community. If anything, restrictions should be reduced for multi-family housing.

This led to a discussion of the local need for housing. Have recent studies be done? Have they included Woodstock or the region? The need is well known and stated in the Town Plan but there is no statistical data to support this conclusion.

Ms. Stadler, as a former resident, noted that Gilford, CT did a survey which showed that local firefighters and teachers could not afford to leave in the town.

The PC agreed that achieving the proper balance between multi-family housing and neighborhood protection will be difficult. Infrastructure issues, access and pedestrian movement will need to be addressed.

IV. OPEN DISCUSSION

A. Health and Wellness

Mr. Bendis reported that he has been working on the Health and Human Services chapter of the Town Plan. He has reached out to Lynn Peterson, who provided input for the last rewrite of the chapter. Mr. Peterson is on the Ottauquechee Health Center board of directors.

Mr. Bendis felt the chapter needs a complete make-over and will be working with Mr. Peterson to accomplish this. Additionally, a health and wellness committee (a goal of the plan) is being formed but is not yet off the ground. An organizational meeting is scheduled for December 6.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for January 3, 2018.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner