

**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**August 1, 2018**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sally Miller, Sara Stadler, Michael Pacht, Susan Boston, Sam Segal, Jeff Bendis, Eric Goldberg

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Simran Johnston, Pritam Singh, Charan Karr, Joe Boisvert, Jiwan Noah Singh, Gary Laperle, Jessica Laperle, Ann Jones, Lesley Marceau, Kevin Lynch, Mary Margaret Sloan, Howard Krum, Dave Willis, Kathleen Willis, Jill Davies, Eden Piconi, Louis Piconi, Michael Brands

**I. OPENING**

Chair Miller opened the meeting at 7:30 pm.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the June 6, 2018 were approved with minor amendment.

**III. PUBLIC HEARING**

**A. T-4836-18 4587 South Road**

The application is for Zoning Amendment to Town Zoning Map to rezone 4587 South Road from Residential Low Density to Business Service / Light Industrial.

Owners, Ms. Johnson and Mr. Singh, presented the application.

The owners wish to place artist studios, workshops and production areas for various arts, mainly pottery. An existing barn would be renovated and a new larger barn would be built on site.

The 1.5 acre property was recently purchased. A house and two out buildings are placed along the road frontages. The rear of the property is an open meadow with a tree lined border.

The property is located at the southwest corner of Route 106 and Cowdry Path Road. The Kedron Valley garage is the abutting property to the east. The South Woodstock sewer plant is located across Route 106. A Short Term Rental home is located directly west and a vacant parcel the former “gravel pit” is located directly south.

The property is located on the north entrance to South Woodstock. The proposed use would not impact the historical and residential character of South Woodstock.

Mr. Singh noted there is only one commercially zoned property in South Woodstock, the country store which he purchased for his daughter, Ms. Johnston. The store was reopened exactly a year ago today. The store is now operating well and a small art gallery has been established in the red house directly south of the store.

Mr. Singh purchased the Kedron Valley Inn, abutting the store to the north, as well. The inn is about to be reopened after extensive renovations. The old school house located at the bottom of Church Hill Road and abutting the Inn was purchased recently. An application to rezone the school house is from Residential Low Density to Inn will be heard at the PC's September 5, 2018 meeting. The intent is to have art classes, yoga workspace and conference rooms associated with the inn placed within the building.

The Kedron Valley Farm located across from GMHA was purchased for future agriculture ventures to be associated with the inn. This may need a change to the integrated agriculture overlay zone. Additional properties in the hamlet have been purchased for employee housing.

Chair Miller read the reference to South Woodstock in the Town Plan's Economic Development Chapter, noting that the proposed use is compatible to the goals and statements found within the plan.

Mr. Singh hopes to build an industrial looking structure on the rear lawn of the 4587 South Road property. The existing barn on site would be rebuilt to fit the needs of the proposed use.

Although the main focus will be pottery; black smithing, sculpture and other arts are also envisioned.

The owners hope to sponsor artist-in-residence sessions, whereby renowned artists would live in the hamlet for a period of time and conduct studios and classes during their stay.

There would be no retail proposed for the property. Items for sale would be on display at the gallery and the inn with sales taking place at the store.

Mr. Piconi stated, in his support of the request, this is exactly what Woodstock needs. The renovated country store has become a welcomed hub of activity for all of Woodstock.

Testimony was voted close.

After discussion, Mr. Pacht moved with a second by Ms. Boston to approve the requested zoning change from RLD to BS/LI and to move it to the Selectboard's agenda. The motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

The Town Planner noted the Selectboard could potentially hear the request at their September 18, 2018 meeting. There is a mandatory 30 waiting period between PC and Selectboard hearings. Applicants will be notified when the hearing is to be scheduled.

## **B. Integrated Agriculture**

Directly before the meeting, Mr. Segal emailed a revised integrated agriculture regulation. The Town Planner made and distributed copies to the audience.

A map with 24 farms and a spread sheet with additional information on the 24 farms had been emailed earlier by the Town Planner. The 24 farms resulted from the Town Planner's search of viable farms. The spread sheet includes name of principle owner, location, acreage of main property, distance from potential event site to nearest neighbors and the tax map number.

The PC asked how identification of farms is conducted. Required Agriculture Practices (RAPs) have been adopted by the State Department of Agriculture. These have become the state wide norm as the definition of a farm. The 24 farms have not been RAP reviewed but for the most part have a history and appear to be valid farms.

Mr. Bendis asked to work with the existing Integrated Agriculture regulations and tie the Piconi request in to the text. Mr. Pacht suggested working directly with Mr. Segal to work out the language for a later meeting. Mr. Piconi noted he could write a draft as well that would have his ideas spelled out.

After a lengthy discussion, the PC agreed to proceed with a line by line review of the Segal draft.

There were two schools of thought in drafting the regulations. The current regulations include an overlay zone map, which indicates exactly which properties have been selected for the use. A second way, would be to allow the use everywhere in Woodstock with a specific definition of farm that would serve as the threshold for application. The definition of farm becomes very important in this scenario.

The PC agreed to the use of a threshold definition that would allow the integrated agriculture uses everywhere to those who qualify.

The RAPs definition uses a minimum of \$2000 in agricultural product sold per year as the threshold. Is this too low? The allowed events such as weddings could generate well in excess of this amount. Ten weddings a year at \$10,000 an event would produce \$100,000.

The Town Planner noted that in the Town of Shelburne a ratio has been established to assure the farm use is not secondary to the event use. They have a 2:1 ratio, agriculture is required to be responsible for 2/3 of the annual income with 1/3 allowed to come from event income.

Would a 50:50 ratio work, what is the proper ratio?

Mr. Goldberg that a ratio is not important. The key element is that money is being brought to Woodstock thus augmenting the tourist economy.

Another point of discussion for definition is should the farm be an established use. Is a farm with a 2 year history established, or would that require a 5 year history?

Mr. Pacht asked the Piconis if a 2:1 income ratio works for them. Mr. Piconi stated no, that would not be reasonable.

Mr. Bendis asked how much revenue is produced with the garlic harvest.

Mr. Piconi responded that last year's crop was a flop, this year is much better but did not give a revenue figure.

Chair Miller read various sections from the Town Plan on both agriculture and historic preservation. The Town Plan notes that a balance needs to be struck. A farm still has to have farming characteristics and visual value.

Ms. Piconi stated tourism is the driver in the Woodstock economy, events and weddings will help the economy.

Mr. Piconi stated bus tourists do not help the local economy. After living here for 4 years, the economy needs to evolve.

Mr. Segal also noted he is not concerned with revenue percentages.

Mr. Pacht felt the \$2000 in agricultural product sales is far too low. It would allow the event use anywhere for a minimal farm operation.

Mr. Segal suggested the dollar amount should be an average and not a specific year figure.

The bottom line is a farm needs to be an established operation and not one created solely to allow events not allowed elsewhere in the town.

The size of the farm was discussed. The current draft states a 4 acre minimum.

The PC agreed to remove the long listings of identifying elements of a farm on the second page of the draft and replace with "shall comply with RAPs and as they may be amended over time".

It was noted the C. 5 section of the Segal draft would be problematic for the Piconis. It requires events to be clearly subordinate to the farming operation and to be focused on agricultural goods produced on the farm. For example: the intent is to have a meal made from ingredients grown on the farm. A meal solely based on lavender and garlic would not meet the definition.

Chair Miller referring to the Town Plan stated the events need to be agriculturally based. Maintenance of farm character is an important element.

Mr. Pacht felt the money would be made from the events and not from the farm products.

Mr. Piconi wants to make the farm a success. Lavender takes years to get established.

Chair Miller stated the events are only being allowed because the farm is a farm, otherwise it's a commercial use in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

Mr. Goldberg asked to have the farm definition drive the regulation. If they pass the farm definition the events would be allowed.

Chair Miller stated if food does not become a part of the event how do the Piconis meet the standard. The events are meant to celebrate the farm and not the event.

Ms. Stadler suggested replace “subordinate” with “enhance” in C.5 regarding the farming operation.

Regarding noise and distance standards the Piconis stated a desire have all indoor events, this would reduce the noise impacts. They also asked for longer hours of operation.

D.4 of the draft will need to add a line on indoor events and that they stop at 11:00 pm.

The noise level needs to be tweaked . Chair Miller suggested a 60 db at the property line.

The Town Planner opened a noise app on his cell phone which indicated the voices in the room to range from the high 40 dbs to the mid 50dbs.

After discussion it was agreed to change the size of events to two standards: large events would be 45-150 persons and small events would be less than 45 persons.

Ms. Piconi suggested not more than one large event per weekend. She would like hold additional smaller events such as yoga and tastings.

An annual report should be required. This would be similar to that required for current Short Term Rentals. It would list number of events, size of events, dates of events, and revenue produced from events and agricultural production.

Ms. Marceau, Ms. Piconi’s mother, noted Eden is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation Vermonter who has come back to Woodstock to raise a family and grow the economy. Woodstock needs to keep young families, allowing this would encourage other young families to move to Woodstock.

Due to the late hour, the discussion was continued to September 5.

**IV. OTHER BUSINESS - None**

**V. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Village Zoning Rewrite**

There was no time available to discuss the Village Zoning Regulation rewrite.

**B. Energy Chapter Rewrite**

There was no time available to discuss the Town Plan Energy Chapter rewrite.

A special meeting is set for August 23, 2018 to address the rewrites of VZR and EE. chapter.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS** - None

**VII. NEXT MEETING**

The next regularly scheduled meeting is September 5, 2018.

Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday August 23, 2018.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP  
Town/Village Planner