



Woodstock, Vermont *The Shire Town of Windsor County*
TOWN - VILLAGE MANAGER GOVERNMENT

Town Hall • P.O. Box 488 • Woodstock, Vermont 05091 • 802/457-3456

PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft Minutes
February 6, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Sara Stadler, Ben Jerve, Eric Goldberg
MEMBERS ABSENT: None
OTHERS PRESENT: Tim Piper, Isabelle Chicoine, Karim Houry, Barry Milstone, Patrick Fultz, Dieter Nohl, Willa Nohl, Brenda Blakeman, Barbara Barry, Gail Childs, Michael Brands

I. OPENING

Chair Miller opened the meeting at 7:30 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The PC approved the January 2, 2019 minutes as submitted.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Vermont Inn and B&B Association

Tim Piper, president of the Vermont Inn and B&B Association, spoke to the PC. He is also a consultant helping individuals to buy and sell inns & B&B's. The presentation focused on the impact of Short Term Rentals (STR), which are becoming prolific in the State of Vermont.

The association mainly wants an even playing field. B&B's and inns are forced to comply with regulations that are 32 pages long and annual fees. This is very time consuming and costly. STRs do not need to meet these high standards and most often have no review.

STRs have cut into B&B and Inn business. The issue is not the presence of websites such as AIRBNB. Most inns use these websites as they are recognized as the world's best forum for selling rooms.

An issue that has been ignored until recently is the community impact STRs have in removing affordable housing opportunities. This especially true in a state like Vermont and towns like Woodstock that have a high destination focus. The affordable housing issue has become the number one concern with STRs both nationally and globally.

Insurance is also a major concern. Very few STRs have commercial insurance. Regular home owner's insurance does not cover most STR problems and complaints.

There are 6500 STR rental units in Vermont.

Act 10 regarding STRs was passed in 2017. It requires STRs with 3 rooms or more to have a licensed registration. STRs with less than 3 rooms are unregulated.

There are three governmental entities involved: tax, health, and fire and safety.

To rent out as a STR one needs to register with the tax department to acquire a tax id number. This number needs to be attached to all advertisement and promotions.

The law does not go far enough.

A big concern is the number of multiple buildings owned by a single owner. Vacation rental companies are buying up homes and converting them to full time vacation rentals. Many legislators still think the STRs are conducted by a home owner looking to help out a hapless tourist on an occasional basis. They need to be educated.

The affordable housing issue is becoming apparent in larger communities. Vermont already is a very expensive state with few affordable housing opportunities and Woodstock is one of the more expensive towns within the state.

Ski resorts are finding out employees can't afford to live in the work area. Sugar Bush requires 900 winter employees. Of this number, 650 can't find a home in the work area.

Windsor County Senator Alison Clarkson is a member of the committee tasked with Act 10 which regulates STRs.

A number of B&B and inn owners were present.

Mr. Fultz, Sleep Woodstock, has been talking with Mr. Piper for a while. He handed out a proposal for a task force that would draft STR amendments for the Town and Village Zoning Regulations.

Mr. Milstone, The Farmhouse Inn and member of the Economic Development Commission, explained STR competition with inns/B&B. His intent is to propose town regulations to better control STRs. There are more STR rooms than inn rooms in the town. Affordable housing is a major concern in Woodstock as evidenced by the EDC Housing presentation earlier this evening.

Mr. Goldberg asked what other towns do to enforce STR regulations.

Woodstock is at the forefront of STR regulation and enforcement. Most towns don't want to deal with the issue as it is very difficult and time consuming. Brattleboro has an annual registration fee of \$125.

The STR task force will start drafting regulations. They will review these with the Town Planner and then submit them to the PC for adoption.

B. Kelly Way Gardens

Mr. Pauly, manager of the Kelly Way Gardens, discussed how the Integrated Agriculture regulations adopted in October 2017 have worked out so far. The regulations were written to

allow the Woodstock Inn to operate an event and garden site off of Route 106 across from the golf course. Mr. Pauly stated everything is working well, the gardens have been a great success. He did not see a need to make any modifications to the regulations.

There have been no wedding receptions on site, mainly due to market issues related to outdoor events on a somewhat smallish site. Small weddings have occurred, but no receptions. The biggest success has been the dinners and other garden related events which take place mostly in the renovated barn. Cooking and garden classes have become popular events.

Recently an Act 250 permit amendment request was made to change their source of water.

The PC would like to expand the Integrated Agriculture uses to other parts of Woodstock. This could enhance the economy and help retain farms and farming.

Kelly Gardens does not sell food in the traditional manner. All food and garden produce is used by the inn and not sold on the open market.

Attendance works well when there are fewer than 100 participants as the site is small. Parking is not an issue for most events with participants of larger events shuttled over from the inn via vans.

The Town Planner noted that the State's Agricultural law effective July 1, 2018, allows site plan review for agriculturally related events. This could be a simple amendment by just adding agricultural uses to the list of Site Plan uses reviewed under Section 809.

Mr. Segal stated economic development is important as long as the neighbors are not negatively impacted.

Kelly Gardens has one full-time year-around employee, two full-time seasonal employees and two part-time seasonal employees. All employees are local and housing has not been an issue.

Mr. Pauly finished with a statement indicating the Integrated Agriculture regulations need to recognize the preservation of farm structures as part of its goal. Without the regulations allowance of the non-farm type events, it is highly unlikely the historic Kelly Way barn would have been restored. There are numerous old barns in deteriorating shape that need maintenance.

C. Laura Spittle. Zoning Change in South Woodstock

Due to freezing rain, Ms. Spittle was unable to attend.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Town Plan Rewrite

The Energy Chapter has been rewritten, however adoption is now held up due to State mandates to include Forestry/Wildlife and Capital Improvement details within.

The Town Planner drafted a Forestry/Wildlife amendment for inclusion in the Natural Elements Chapter. The draft has been reviewed by Kevin Geiger and Pete Fellows at the TRORC. A rough draft of the Capital Improvement discussion has been prepared as well. Additional details will be required to complete the draft. Both drafts have been sent to the PC.

PC members asked what else should be done in line with the Town Plan. Town Planner noted the required elements are almost complete, however the PC may amend as much of the plan as they desire. Education is an issue which Mr. Segal and Mr. Goldberg have been working on. The Health Chapter was rewritten by former member Jeff Bendis. These are just two examples.

B. Village Zoning Rewrite

Due to a shortage of time there was no further discussion of the Village Zoning Regulations rewrite.

VII. NEXT MEETING

After discussion, the PC agreed to hold a special meeting on February 13, 2019. Three members are unable to attend. Next regularly scheduled meeting would be March 6, 2018.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner