

PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft Minutes
July 3, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Miller, Eric Goldberg, Sara Stadler, Ben Jervey
MEMBERS ABSENT: Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht
OTHERS PRESENT: Tesha Buss, Derek Demas, Carole Pickett, Kate Gray, Susan Fuller, David Hill, Jen Falvey, Michael Brands

I. OPENING

Chair Miller opened the meeting at 7:30 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The PC approved the June 5, 2019 minutes as submitted.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

A Planning Commission held a public hearing per 24 V.S.A. §4384, on the Town /Village of Woodstock Plan to adopt a rewritten Energy Chapter, add Forest Blocks, Wildlife Connectivity, and Capital Improvements.

The Town Planner stated he has been in conversation with the TRORC as they conducted a pre-review of the proposed amendments. A June 14, 2019 letter highlighted five minor changes that are required to meet State standards for confirmation. The changes were drafted and have been sent to the PC and TRORC officials.

The changes were reviewed. On page 32, the renewal of the Village Center Designation was changed from 5 to 8 years. On page 35, a paragraph on adult continuing education opportunities was added to the Education chapter. On page 67 of the Natural Elements Chapter, the title of the Basin 10 Report was changed to include the word, "Tactical". On page 101 of the Transportation Chapter, a sentence noting rail service is available in White River Junction was added. On page 114 of the Land Use Chapter, an action program for the various zoning districts was added.

The five maps associated with the Energy Chapter were also mentioned. They have been part of the draft amendment since the process was started in 2017.

Chair Miller asked for public comment on the proposed amendments. There were none.

Chair Miller asked for PC comments on the proposed amendments.

Mr. Goldberg stated he could not approve the Education Chapter as written. He feels the information is old and not factual anymore.

Chair Miller noted all chapters of the plan can be dated to note how old and out of date they are.

A lengthy discussion took place. Mr. Goldberg restated he could not approve the education chapter as written. There is opportunity now to rewrite this chapter. Education is the most important element of the community and therefore the plan.

After additional discussion, Ms. Stadler moved with a second by Mr. Jervis to approve the Town Plan amendments as submitted.

The motion failed with a 3-1 (Mr. Goldberg voted against). A four vote either way (approval or denial) is necessary for action on the matter.

The action is tabled until next meeting, July 17, 2019. This will allow an additional vote on the amendments that may meet the quorum standard of 4 votes either way.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Village Zoning Rewrite

The Town Planner noted he is drafting a 2019 Village Zoning Regulations based on the PC's current 2 year review of the regulations.

Main areas of concern still not addressed are Short Term Rentals, Multi-Dwelling Units, and the Design Review District. Menu board signs for restaurants need discussion. Additionally, the official zoning map will need review at the end of the process.

B. Woodstock Community Playschool / Mt. Rainbow Solar Siting

Ms. Buss, owner of Mt. Rainbow Playschool, submitted a draft letter to approve a proposed solar field for a Public Utility Commission review. The draft letter asks for a "preferred site" designation by the Town.

The PC reviewed the letter and stated they could not approve it as written. The Town has not yet adopted an Enhanced Energy Chapter whereby alternative energy facilities such as the proposed solar field are reviewed. There are no local standards for review.

To complete an aesthetic view shed analysis, Chair Miller asked to see better site plans of the proposal. There are no property lines or topographic lines shown on any of the provided maps.

Back in January, the Town Planner wrote a request for screening (along Route 12) of the solar panels. In January, a hearing was held to gather public input for the PUC review on the proposed solar field.

Ms. Buss will provide the PC with more information and will redraft a letter to be more generic in its approval request.

The request was continued to the Planning Commissions' July 17th Special Meeting.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Follow-up Short Term Rental Study Group

Owners and former owners of Short Term Rentals: Ms. Fuller, Mr. Hill, Mr. Demas, Ms. Gray, Ms. Falvey, and Ms. Pickett asked to discuss the Short Term Rental regulation rewrite process.

A meeting on June 27, 2019 with 100 attendees, discussed the many aspects of the Short Term Rentals in the community. There was no new information proposed. The meeting was a joint hearing of the Select Board and Trustees to gather information on whether or not Short Term Rentals should be considered an emergency situation requiring immediate action. The two boards will meet again Monday July 8, 2019 to continue the discussion.

The PC reiterated they do not support the use of interim zoning to address the situation. The Village Zoning Regulations are currently being rewritten, STRs are a part of that.

Ms. Stadler, having attended the June 27 meeting, felt the sense of the meeting was to ask for regulations that are clear and easy to understand and to request additional enforcement.

Ms. Gray, owner of 3 STRs, noted that per Act 10, the rooms and meals registration number and the State Fire Marshal's office approval should be forwarded to the town.

Chair Miller stated that a conditional use review allows neighbors to be involved in the process.

Ms. Gray did not like the limitations currently placed on STRs.

Ms. Fuller feels regulation should be done at the State level.

Ms. Falvey, as a realtor, asked how she could help in the process.

Mr. Demas noted a search of Airbnb and similar sites came up with 77 STRs, 70 of which he could identify. Mr. Demas agreed having all properties abide by the same rules is a good thing. He asked how he and other STR owners could participate in the rewrite process.

VII. NEXT MEETING

Next PC meeting is scheduled for July 17, 2019. A special "visioning" meeting is to be held on this date, in the back conference room.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner