

PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft Minutes
July 17, 2019
Special Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Miller, Ben Jervej, Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht
MEMBERS ABSENT: Eric Goldberg, Sara Stadler
OTHERS PRESENT: Tesha Buss, Dee Gish, Jill Davies, Zach Ralph, Susan Fuller, David Hill, *Michael Brands

I. OPENING

Chair Miller opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The approval of the July 3, 2019 minutes was continued.

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.

Chair Miller reviewed amended items. 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 plus the Scenic Viewshed map were also mentioned. They have been part of the draft amendment since the process was started in 2017.

Mr. Segal stated the STR process appears to be more important than the Town Plan changes making it more difficult to rewrite the Education Chapter. The chapter is dated and needs immediate attention. Families are leaving Woodstock. The school board is discussing a new WUMSHS building, a new Education Chapter would be helpful to the process.

Ms. Davies asked about the adoption process.

Chair Miller responded a plan can be amended at any time as long as it meets current state standards.

Chair Miller continued, the Energy Chapter has been worked on for over two years and needs to be approved. The Education Chapter is not yet ready for adoption. The Energy Chapter rewrite will allow the review of alternative energy sites. Currently the Woodstock Community Playschool has a solar facility that is up for review by the Public Utility Commission. The school is currently seeking approval from the PC. The PC prefers to approve with the request conditioned on adequate screening of the site. However, there can be no binding agreement to cover screening under the current PUC approval process.

Mr. Jervy noted he voted to approve the Energy Chapter two weeks ago in the spirit of compromise to move the issue forward.

Mr. Segal felt the play school facility should be endorsed with a side statement to add screening.

It was noted that two separate issues are being discussed at the same time, the Energy Chapter adoption and the Woodstock Community Playschool solar facility approval letter.

After discussion, Ms. Boston moved with a second by Chair Miller to approve the Town Plan amendments as discussed. Discussion followed.

Mr. Segal felt that the Education Chapter would be placed on the back burner due to the pressing STR mandates from the Trustees and Select Board.

Mr. Pacht suggested that a hard deadline to rewrite Ed Chapter be established.

Chair Miller stated the Trustees gave a 90 day period to rewrite STR regulations at the Village level and Select Board has a 180 day window to adopt the current STR amendment which would remove the Residential Five Acre and Forestry exemption.

*The Town Planner joined the PC meeting at 8:00 pm.

Chair Miller noted the Education Chapter needs to be rewritten with public input and careful thought. This will take time and should not be rushed.

Mr. Segal does not support a deadline to rewrite Education Chapter.

The vote was called. The motion died with a 2-3 vote.

After a brief period of discussion, the PC requested a second vote.

Mr. Jervis asked for a cover letter that would state the PC feels the Education Chapter is dated and does not accurately reflect the current thoughts on education in the community. Therefore, the PC is actively rewriting the Education Chapter for future Town Plan adoption.

Ms. Boston moved with a second by Chair Miller to approve the Town Plan with the proposed amendments. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

After additional discussion, Mr. Jervis motioned with a second by Ms. Boston to request a cover letter indicating the Education Chapter is dated and in need of an immediate rewrite, which will be offered for approval in the near future. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Village Zoning Rewrite No Action

B. Woodstock Community Playschool / Mt. Rainbow Solar Siting

Ms. Buss, owner of Woodstock Community Rainbow Playschool, resubmitted a draft letter to approve a proposed solar field (Mt. Rainbow Solar Siting), for the Public Utility Commission review process. The draft letter asks for a “preferred site” designation by the Town. Ms. Buss wishes to screen the site and reviewed a screening plan with the PC.

The request had been continued from the July 3, 2019 meeting to allow clarification from TRORC on the approval process.

A July 8, 2019 letter from Dee Gish, TRORC Energy Coordinator, noted the PC can issue approval of a “preferred site” without having an adopted Enhanced Energy Chapter. A side agreement can be made regarding the screening issue. Ms. Gish was present.

Ms. Buss reviewed the landscaping plan which is meant to screen the proposed field of solar panels. The panels would be placed in a 128' wide and 325' long enclosure, surrounded by a black lattice fence. The fence would be placed 107' from Route 12. The panels are fixed with a two season angle adjustment, summer / winter.

Arborvitae are proposed as the screening shrub. The trees would be planted along the front and the south side halfway up the hill. Main intent is to screen from views along Route 12. The sledding hill would be retained as is.

The panels would be 6' to 15' tall, the site rises 24' from bottom to top.

Chair Miller reviewed numerous errors that were found in the written proposal to the PUC. She felt this area is one of the most scenic as it is the north entrance to the Village. The report noted the area is not scenic. The site is highly visible, especially to traffic along Rt. 12.

Ms. Buss noted the letter was an early draft and many of the errors have been corrected.

After discussion, Mr. Pacht motioned with a second by Mr. Segal to accept the letter of approval as drafted. Discussion followed.

The PC supports the solar facility and agreed appropriate screening is proposed.

The Town Planner stated as a community oriented business, a day care center, there would be additional peer pressure to enforce the adequate screening.

Ms. Gish asked Ms. Buss if a formal application to the PUC had been filed. TRORC has not yet received the required letter of service.

Ms. Buss stated the PUC application had been emailed but not posted due its 200 page length.

The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

V. NEW BUSINESS None

VII. NEXT MEETING
Next PC meeting is scheduled for August 7, 2019.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT
The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner