

**WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION  
WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL  
31 THE GREEN  
March 4, 2020  
DRAFT MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Ben Jervy, Susan Boston, Eric Goldberg, Sara Stadler  
**MEMBERS ABSENT:** One Vacancy  
**OTHERS PRESENT:** Wendy Marrinan, Isabelle Chicoine, Jennifer Raymond, Doug Raymond, Thomas O'Brien, Michael Brands

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of February 5, 2020 were approved as submitted.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Town Plan-Education Chapter**

Mr. Goldberg wrote a first draft of the Education Chapter for discussion purposes. At the February meeting, the PC set the document in a Google Docs format which allows easy and live editing. Mr. Segal, Mr. Jervy and Chair Miller took turns entering edits over the course of discussion.

The student capacity at Woodstock Elementary School was discussed. The student population was higher in pre-2000s. However, due to the fact that classroom layouts have changed over time makes it difficult to place the same number of students in the same space.

In a discussion of lead test for the WES water system, it was mentioned that the same test were also done for the WUHSMS. These tests should also be included in the plan.

Mr. Segal noted the school district is considering increasing the capacity of the WES pre-K, by adding add a 2<sup>nd</sup> class.

Apparently, there is a waiting list for the pre-K program. Local (Woodstock residents) are not guaranteed to have automatic placement. Next year a lottery system is being considered.

In 2012 substantial playground improvements were completed. These were accomplished without taxpayer money, which may serve as a model for other needed improvements.

The middle school chapter was then reviewed. This led to a discussion of how the athletic facilities don't match competing schools. Although Woodstock has a historically high level of

success with their athletic programs, the playing fields, etc. are wanting. For example, there is no track. The distribution of local education funds to other towns (Act 60) is a cause of this.

Factual information on academic achievement was sought. The High School Profile 2020 shows that 76% of the students go on to college, with a 96% high school graduation rate.

The section on Act 60 and its impact to local education and rebuilding the WUHSMS school was discussed. Rate of money sent to other towns ranges up to 60% of the tax money slated for educational purposes is sent out of town.

Cost of the rebuild is estimated to be \$50-70 million. That figure is not firm and therefore should not be mentioned in the town plan. The Town Plan cycle is good for 8 years, the figure could be way off by the end of the cycle.

Rebuilding a school will not require the Act 60 overage. A separate bond would be set specific to the school rebuild. It is hoped private fund raising can be accomplished to offset some of the costs. This needs to be looked into.

The action items were then discussed. These had not been drafted and therefore were not reviewed at the last meeting. The items were heavily edited as the discussion progressed.

Mr. Goldberg reiterated the importance of hiring a consultant.

The PC agreed the funding source of a consultant is not important, but problems should be highlighted, and a course of action needs to be set.

A separate consultant may be needed for the two main issues: drug and alcohol problems and the review of academic standards.

Mr. Segal emphasized the cost of not doing anything is catastrophic. Lower property values would cause people and families to leave town.

The PC agreed a new paragraph addressing this should be placed at the beginning of the chapter and not be lost in the action statements or the seven pages of text.

A statement was made that the town needs to fulfill our obligations to future generations.

Mr. Segal noted that restoring the academics Woodstock has been known for historically needs to be a key goal.

Mr. Goldberg agreed and felt this statement should be front and center in the chapter. Mr. Goldberg felt a brief report, 1-2 pages, should be written to highlight the issues. A 7 page chapter in the Town Plan may not be read by all who need to be informed.

An action item for Act 60 was separated from Goal 1. It will be placed later potentially as Goal 5.

Goal 3 refers to reduction of substance abuse in the school system.

Mr. Segal felt one needs to identify the causes of abuse, more so than blaming students.

Goal 4 notes support for the school's 2020-24 plan.

Both Mr. Segal and Mr. Goldberg wondered if Goal 4 should be removed as it is not detailed enough.

After additional discussion, the PC agreed to remove Goal 4.

The process of town plan amendments was then discussed.

The Town Planner needs to place an ad in the local paper by Monday noon to allow for an April 1, 2020 PC public hearing. (Note-Meeting date changed to May 1, 2020).

After additional discussion, Mr. Segal motioned with a second by Ms. Boston to approve the document pending minor edits regarding verification of tax numbers and adjustment of a few tables.

The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.

## **B. Rural Retreat**

The Town Planner noted that the January 15, 2020 draft is the latest version of the Rural Retreat. Copies were distributed to both audience and PC members.

A lengthy discussion of aesthetics took place.

Mr. Segal felt the Town should not control what a building looks like for Rural Retreat requests. Design Review controls are okay in the Village as they protect the historic district, however a rural area should not have these aesthetic controls. This will not allow the potential businesses to be viable.

Chair Miller stated scale of the building is a big problem. Large butler type buildings would not mesh with well Woodstock's rural character.

The Town Planner noted Woodstock's aesthetic character, Village and rural, is the main draw for both residents and tourists, and needs to be protected.

Ms. Marrinan stated the section as written is a good balance. Should one want a commercial use in the rural area, then they should be willing to meet certain aesthetic standards.

Ms. Stadler moved to continue the discussion to the next meeting. This discussion is not productive and it is late. There was no second.

After additional discussion with no resolution, the subject was continued to the next meeting.

The Town Planner will email all members the latest draft of the Rural Retreat.

## **C. Village Zoning Rewrite**

Due to late hour there was no action.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. T'Other House - 4 The Green**

Future owners of the T'Other House at 4 the Green would like the ability to place 3 apartments in the building. The property is zoned Central Commercial which allows up to 2 residential units on any parcel. There are no parking requirements in the CC zone. To create a 3<sup>rd</sup> unit, the property would need 16,335 square feet as each unit requires 5445 sq. ft. each. However, the property contains only 12,000 sq. ft.

The owners would like to change the zoning density to equal that of the Residential High Density which allows 3 units on 10,890 sq. ft.

Chair Miller agreed with the concept of allowing more residential units in the downtown area, but felt there must be a better method. A major issue is the lot sizes of the majority of the downtown are quite small, as they include just the building footprint.

A generic rule for the CC properties could be to allow up to three apartments on each lot without the tie to density.

Due to the late hour, there was little time for discussion. The issue will be brought up at the April meeting.

##### **B. PC Vacancy**

Mr. Pacht sent an email around that he will step down immediately from the Planning Commission. The PC thanked Mr. Pacht for his service and wished him well in future endeavors. The Town Planner will place an ad in next week's Vermont Standard.

#### **V. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for April 1, 2020.

#### **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP  
Town Planner