

**WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION
WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL
31 THE GREEN
May 6, 2020**

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Ben Jersey, Susan Boston, Eric Goldberg, Sara Stadler

MEMBERS ABSENT: One Vacancy

OTHERS PRESENT: Bill Kerbin, Stacey Gerrish, Neal Leitner

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of March 4, 2020 were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Set Public Hearing Date – Town Plan: Education Chapter

Chair Miller discussed where the Planning Commission left off at the March 4th, 2020 meeting and noted that since the Plan adoption was not noticed in the paper for the April Planning Commission meeting, which was cancelled due to Covid-19 closures, the Planning Commission has an opportunity to make final changes to the Education Chapter if desired. Chair Miller opened the topic up for discussion.

Mr. Goldberg mentioned that the resignation of the superintendent and the finance director should be added to keep it current. Mr. Segal thought that the resignations are pertinent but was not sure that mentioning a person or persons is helpful. Mr. Goldberg that that referencing the resignations can affect the implementation of the Education Plan. Mr. Segal reiterated that he agreed it is important to mention but perhaps making that point without singling out a specific person would be better. Susan Boston noted that this chapter amendment is written for an 8-year period and was concerned that including this would instantly date the Education Chapter amendment. Mr. Segal thought just a mention to the fact that there has been turnover in the leadership positions would be adequate. Susan Boston reiterated the point that this Education Chapter amendment will have an 8-year lifespan, so mentioning current staff issues would date the amendment as soon as the staffing issues are resolved. Mr. Goldberg respectfully disagreed and

stressed that good leadership is necessary to carry out the goals and objectives set forth in the chapter. Chair Miller moved the discussion along and asked for the wording that should be added. A discussion on the wording of the leadership topic ensued, along with a discussion of which goal this additional statement should be listed under. Mr. Goldman and Mr. Segal weighed in on how detailed the statement should be. Points were made that stressed how critical it is that good leadership is essential to achieving the objectives put forth in the Education Chapter. Chair Miller and Susan Boston discussed role of community engagement in achieving this goal. Mr. Segal thought that the hiring committee makes a bigger impact on hiring the right superintendent and director of finance and operations. The lack of continuity in the superintendent role would be detrimental, so selecting and retaining the right person is crucial.

Final wording under goal 2 item C was put forth as: *The successful implementation of the recommendations laid out in this chapter requires finding and retaining the best leadership possible.*

Chair Miller then discussed the adopting the chapter and scheduling issues. A public hearing notice must be noticed at least 30 days before the public hearing. June 3rd would be too early at this point, since the Standard newspaper is weekly, not daily. Chair Miller and the rest of the commission all agreed that they are flexible on a June Planning Commission date in order to have adequate notification time. Neal Leitner stated he'll look into the publication dates and the subsequent Planning Commission dates and get back to the commissioners with a proposed date in June 2020.

Chair Miller asked for a motion to adopt the changes. Mr. Stegal motioned to adopt the changes and schedule the adoption of Education Chapter Amendment and Town Plan Update at the next Planning Commission meeting in June. Ms. Boston seconded the motion.

Motion passed with a 6-0 vote.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Discussion of Amendment to Town Zoning Regulations – Rural Retreats The January 15, 2020 draft is the latest version of the Rural Retreat.

A discussion of that drat amendment took place. Mr. Segal thought removing item B.4. should be removed, which indicated that new uses should be smaller accessory structures. He noted that a farm could be bought with no significant structures, so putting an accessory structure would be infeasible. He concurred that new structures should respect the scale or style of the existing structures. Chair Miller pointed out that style was not the point of the wording, rather that constraints were not in place. Mr. Segal

mentioned that currently there is no design review in the Town of Woodstock. Chair Miller understood and noted that finding some type of a middle ground would be optimal. Home enterprise was brought up as an example, where constraints were put in place for them. She thought the current draft was too open ended. Her concern is that they will be potentially allowing commercial uses in residential zones. Mr. Segal stated that people should be allowed to exercise their property rights. The point was made that there is no design review for the Town. Mr. Segal stated that we don't want to create a new design review board for the Town. Mr. Goldman asked Chair Miller what she was suggesting. She responded that she was trying to find a middle ground for Rural Retreats. The relationship between the land and adjacent structures should be taken into account.

A discussion on criteria for Rural Retreats ensued. Mr. Jervis stated that screening or setbacks could be considered, or decibel readings could be considered for noise issues. He does not favor subjective determinations. He also pointed out that there are relatively few properties that could be affected by this. Chair Miller reiterated that she thought new development under Rural Retreat should fit in. Mr. Segal felt the Town should not control what a building looks like for Rural Retreat requests in so far as someone should not be prevented from doing something interesting on their property. Chair Miller stated the scale of the building should be analyzed. A discussion regarding character versus scale, neighborhood structures versus structures on the property began. Points were made that the term character may not be best suited for Rural Retreats since character can be construed as whatever is next door. Mr. Segal noted that hypothetically, the town would not want the character of a dollar store next door to be replicated for instance. Scale was then discussed as a better descriptor or design constraint for Rural Retreats than character. Chair Miller thought new Rural Retreat structures should be limited to a residential or agricultural scale, so that they will fit in.

Stacey Gerrish, a property owner chimed in on her point of view. She pointed out that she has no intention of building a structure that is disrespectful to her land or the surrounding neighborhood. She asked for some trust in the matter. Chair Miller mentioned that while she understands and appreciates Stacey Gerrish's intent, in terms of crafting a regulation, trust is hard to include. Stacey Gerrish mentioned that large property owners in Woodstock understand the aesthetic character of the town and landscape. They don't want to deplete the value of their property, nor do they want to deplete the value of others.

A discussion about scale led to proposed wording regarding appropriate scaling of new Rural Retreat structures. This discussion led to an agreement on the wording that should be included in the amended by-law for Rural Retreats.

The proposed draft wording for Section 4 Item B is proposed as: *Proposed uses are encouraged to take place in existing structures. Any new structures must reflect the scale of adjacent properties and structures.*

Chair Miller called for a motion. Ms. Boston motioned to approve the change in wording as written. Ms. Stadler seconded the motion.

Motion passed with a 6-0 vote.

B. Village Zoning Rewrite – Discuss Rewrite Schedule

The Village Zoning regulations were discussed along with a brief history for the Town Planner. Chair Miller described some pertinent issues proposed for the rewrite. Town Planner Neal Leitner mentioned additional issues of importance that Michael Brands discussed with him, including the inclusion of the newly updated Historic Survey, which now includes 90% of the built area of the Village. This may have implications on Design Review Board jurisdictions. Chair Miller advised the Town Planner to look into the T'Other House density request as well.

Chair Miller asked the commission to advise on how to proceed with the Village Zoning Rewrite. She mentioned a member of the Village Development Review Board could be invited to discuss the pertinent issues. Commissioners decided to move ahead with a chapter by chapter review of the rewrite. A Google doc could be used to allow the commissioners to do a rewrite, one chapter at a time.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for June 2020, with a date to be determined according to public hearing notification requirements to properly notice the two agenda items to be voted on at the June meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Neal Leitner
Town Planner*