

WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday, December 2, 2020
7:30PM
ZOOM MEETING
MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Miller, Ben Jervej, Susan Boston, Susan Silberberg, Mary Margaret Sloan, Sam Segal, Sara Stadler, Bryce Sammel
MEMBERS ABSENT: None
OTHERS PRESENT: Neal Leitner, Bryce Sammel

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes were approved as submitted. **Motion passed 6-0.** (Susan Silberberg later pointed out that the minutes lacked a discussion of Village Zoning and should be included.

OLD BUSINESS

Sally Miller briefed the Planning Commission on the Education Chapter and what happened at the Select Board meeting. The Select Board voted to send it back to the Planning Commission for additional review and edits. Sam Segal said the school board raised concerns with the wording discrepancy in the translation of the initial document written by him previously. Segal states there is a difference between the minutes and documents. There was no intent to create a different impact, he says he was just trying to paraphrase the minutes. Sam Segal said that Keri Cole believes if the wording is changed the board cannot object, as it will be word for word, as was written in the minutes.

Sam Segal noted that Ben Ford, who is a Woodstock resident on the Woodstock School Board will be happy to speak regarding this. Sam Segal believes they do not want to pay for a new school, and the way it was written may have implied the School Board will be slightly more engaged in paying for a new school than they had wanted to be.

Sally Miller noted if the minutes are updated the planning commission is covered there. Sally also noted another concern: there were other areas when we reviewed it that updated numbers were mentioned but these have not yet been reflected in the writing. Sally Miller suggested that Neal Leitner gets this cleaned up before moving forward. There were discussions about comparing Woodstock to Hanover, where the school stands in the rankings to also be reviewed, before submitting the education chapter.

Sally Miller posed a question about what the scheduling will be for completing this. Sam Segal asked if the same public hearing rules apply if it has been kicked back to the planning commission. Sally Miller believes yes, and Susan Boston stated it would be starting at ground zero again, Neal

Leitner confirmed it will need to go back to a public hearing if wording is changed. This will also require the final wording being warned.

Sam Segal asked if the mention of the ranking should be removed in light of the rankings that came out recently. Susan Boston states this was removed in part however there is a section where Woodstock is compared to Hanover and the information was unclear. Susan Boston believes part of this can be removed. Neal Leitner mentioned the math section was removed, as there was a discrepancy, but the overall ranking was left he believes. Sara Stadler mentioned that there was a different criteria used. Sally Miller noted that there is an underlined section called Academics this section has to be rewritten or eliminated, which needs to be edited out from the August 14th last modified on October 1. The town planner stated he will remove that statement and remove the rankings comparison with Hanover.

Susan Silberberg asked if it was possible to have the School Board write the draft, so they can provide the wording and input as they know things best. Sam Segal stated that the school is not doing the things they have been tasked with doing. Susan Silberberg asked if this is a historical event with the school, given the response on the current plan. Sam Segal explains that the school district has expanded radically, which has modified the School Board. These changes have caused the School Board to become less responsive as there are some disagreements between the towns. He states this is largely his opinion of why this is causing a large stagnation. Sam Segal stated the previous superintendent was dysfunctional, and there is currently an interim superintendent who is not engaging in any large projects at this time. Sam Segal also states that the elementary school is good, however middle school students tend to change schools and this is not being addressed. Sally Miller added because Woodstock is a small town, with not a lot of staff and money coordinating the outside groups is a challenge. The last time they were all together was approximately 15 years ago for the rewrite of the town plan. She notes that they are focusing on updating one chapter at a time. Sally noted that one member of the planning commission spent a lot of time working on the Education Chapter, then the commission reviewed and edited as well and invited the School Board to meetings. However, the Education Chapter was written with Woodstock School Board in mind. Sally Miller felt like this part is the part that stood out most to her.

Sam Segal asked if it would be satisfactory to review this and come to a consensus over email and ask Neal Leitner to warrant a meeting if the changes are modest. Sara Stadler asked about the numbers and statistics. Susan Boston asked if the numbers should be removed from the report. Sam Segal stated that the numbers could be used in context, as there was a new methodology used. Sally Miller stated the numbers do not worry her at all, and she just wants the report to reflect the updated accurate numbers from the reports.

Sam Segal said that the note under Academics can be removed as it is addressed lower in the section. Susan Boston suggested the math and reading section that is used as a comparison to Hanover be removed. Benjamin Jervey said that if the Hanover sentence was removed, he would be satisfied, Susan Boston agreed, and also mentioned the note of goal two no longer seems necessary. Sam Segal noted that the initial numbers made this easier to write, however with the updated numbers it seems a little harder to get behind, however it is still relevant, as it is not known how the performance will shake out. Sally Miller also reminded the group that these are just recommendations, not requirements. Sam Segal notes that that specific goal was largely a push on Eric Goldberg's behalf.

Susan Boston also asked if the state testing numbers will be put into the report. Neal Leitner noted because of COVID 19 there are no updated state testing numbers. Neal Leitner also noted there was a bit of a communication breakdown with two of the new School Board members who then showed up at the Woodstock Select board meeting, and he asked if there was a way to improve this communication. Sally Miller stated they will be alerted of the public hearing. Sam Segal mentioned that it is not required to invite other town School Board members to Woodstock Planning meetings, however the invite can be extended to Woodstock School Board members, but the current chair of the School Board is not a Woodstock resident. Sally Miller noted that while residents of the other towns have the right to speak at the Woodstock Planning Commission public meeting, the commission works on Woodstock's town plan. She also suggested that the Superintendent is notified and they choose the representatives to send to the meeting.

Sally Miller noted the other change to make is under facilities. Sam Segal stated it reads ***"In 2019 at the recommendation of the campus configuration committee"*** to change the wording from ***"change investigate financing options for"*** to ***"evaluate the feasible financial responsibility of"*** once this is changed it is an exact copy of the school board minutes.

Sally Miller asked for a motion for a public hearing for the month of January and it needs to be warned. Susan Boston moved that the amended Education Chapter is presented for approval to the town plan. This was seconded by Sam Segal.

Vote count as follows:

Sara Stadler approves

Susan Boston approves

Susan Silberberg abstains

Benjamin Jervey approves

Mary Margaret Sloan approves

Sam Segal approves

Sally Miller approves

Motion passed 6-0- with 1 abstention

NEW BUSINESS

Village Zoning Regulations

Sally Miller mentioned that she would like three things added to the list for review under Village Zoning Regulations, one is the new historic district survey, and to look into how this affects the current design district, and whether any changes need to be made. She believes it is important if there will be building and zoning changes to look at the report and make sure the design review is the correct location, are there any changes to be made, given the fact the new historic district is significantly larger than the current design reviews. The new historic district is essentially the entire village now. She asked what defines the design review district, and if it needs to be looked into further.

Another item added to the list by Sally Miller is the short-term rental coordinates in the village, that were adopted, and to make sure what zoning has is what the trustees adopted for short term rentals. Neal Leitner stated there are some discrepancies between the town and the village, and it would be good to get these aligned. He notes that the number of rentals per property in the village is silent, whereas in the town it states one rental per property.

The last item added to the list by Sally Miller is the housing issue, and if there are changes to be made. In current zoning there is language that needs to be looked at, such as accessory dwelling units.

Susan Boston suggested looking at Short Term rentals first, as it is currently in the forefront. She believes the differences between town and village are intentional. Sally Miller said the planning commission should worry about the basics, the locations and the numbers, and asked Neal Leitner to look both plans over and make sure they are in sync with each other. He noted there is a short-term rental pack at the town hall, and he can make this electronic, and will share with the planning commission.

Susan Silberberg asked to address some of the items from a previous list she had. Sally Miller read some of the items on the list, stated most are cut and dry, besides the design and design review color item. Susan Silberberg stated that the previous minutes need an updated list from the last meeting. There are multiple issues with the Housing item, regarding zoning, setbacks, lot coverage, parking, detached apartments, and if are they actually accessory dwelling apartments and how does this merge with the current zoning. The commission should decide if the goal is to be able to allow for these types of units. Sara Stadler asked if this has already been done on Elm Street with the large houses turned into condos. Sally Miller replied that a survey has been suggested, and she does not know how long they have been condos and if those fit the current

zoning, because if not, it would be a shame if the buildings next door would not be able to do the same.

Susan Silberberg asked how these types of items have been addressed in the past, do smaller commissions work on each item, or how it is technically tackled. Sally Miller stated most of these items can be addressed easily, however the housing and historic district will be more complicated. She mentioned that there is a Housing group currently coming from the EDC which gets more into the economics of how the town improves the housing situation. Susan Silberberg, Susan Boston, Mary Margaret Sloan, and Sally Miller will speak at Charlie Kimball's Project regarding the housing discussion. Sally Miller said because the Village zoning will be rewritten it is important to see what can be done in terms of regulatory pieces.

Susan Boston noted that next month Short Term Rental to work on the agenda and asked if there are any small items on the list that can be addressed. Sam noted the items on the chat list were larger and would most likely not be able to be discussed tonight, such as GMP charging stations, and density to historic district. (Susan Silberberg added to the Zoom Chat List: allowing different density in the CDB, Historic district boundaries, COVID – outdoor dining, signage, sandwich boards...what should stay, how should regulations be changed? Tesla wall and chargers and if GMP will allow lease of electric charging stations). Sally Miller said next month design review and signs should also be tackled, and that every time the zoning is rewritten these items are tweaked, she suggested review items along with short term rentals.

Neal Leitner mentioned one item to discuss with this could be fencing guidelines for the village. This topic has gone through the design review board, as well as village development board, as the 6 ft fences are causing a "bowling alley" effect on properties without a fence, so perhaps adding some fences over 4-feet in height in the village could be reviewed as a conditional use so the VDRB and Design Review Board can analyze the character of the neighborhood with these applications.

Neal Leitner stated he had a meeting with Geoff Martin, the new energy coordinator for the 6 towns, they also met with someone from Efficiency Vermont regarding stretch codes. He did state this could affect affordable housing. Sam Segal stated his house is approved by Efficiency Vermont and it was substantially more expensive to build. Neal also is to meet with the Conservation Commission to discuss carbon sequestration and forestry.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:05pm