

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**MUNICIPALITY OF WOODSTOCK, VERMONT**  
**WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION**  
31 The Green  
Woodstock, VT 05091

The Woodstock Planning Commission held a public meeting on Wednesday, May 3, 2023 to discuss the following:

Members present: Mary Margaret Sloan, Vice Chair, Susan Silberberg, Frank Horneck, Laura Powell, and Brad Lawrence.

Public present: Rebecca Mitchell, Andrew Winter, Executive Director Twin Pines Housing Trust, and Matt Giffin from Banwell Architects.

Staff present: Steven Bauer and Stephanie Appelfeller

**Administrative Tasks**

- Call to Order: Mary Margaret Sloan called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM.
- Adjustments to Agenda: Laura Powell proposed adjusting the agenda to address the website update and the character survey to the top of the agenda. There were no objections.
- Approve Minutes:  
Mary Margaret Sloan discussed an amendment needed to the notes from last meeting. Mary Margaret Sloan indicated she did not vote against the Two Rivers requested change commercial light industrial to business service industrial and the vote should be amended to reflect 5-0.  
Susan Silberburg moved to approve the 4/11/23 minutes with the amended change. Laura Powell seconded.

**VOTE: 4-0. Approved.**

**Website Update** – Laura Powell presented the new Planning Commission website. Woodstock Community Television YouTube station will host the online meetings.

**Setback Map** - Susan Silberberg and Laura Powell surveyed the town and created a map of existing setbacks that will be used to determine minimum setback regulations going forward.

Steven Bauer introduced the new Zoning Assistant, Stephanie Appelfeller.

**Twin Pines Housing Trust – Andrew Winter, Executive Director, and Matt Giffin from Banwell Architects**

Twin Pines purchased the four buildings located at 34 & 36 Pleasant in November 2022. There are 4 structures currently on the site, two historic buildings along Pleasant Street dated from the 1830s and two additional buildings in the rear of the site constructed in the 1970s. There are 26 units used as affordable senior housing. Twin Pines plans to replace the two 1970s buildings in

the rear of the property. Buildings do not have elevators or lifts for mobility and are energy inefficient, as well as mold issues. Andrew Winter continued that Twin Pines would like the initial take from the planning commission on concepts for redevelopment.

Matt Giffin of Banwell Architects explained that the existing Woodstock zoning regulations include a 35' height restriction. Andrew Winter explained how Twin Pines recently completed construction of the Summerpark Residences in Hanover NH which have a similar 35' height in zoning regulations, with some exceptions for parapets, elevator shafts and mechanical units that can go above the 35' height max. Summerpark is a 3-story building at 34.8', excluding the parapets.

Matt Giffin explained the only way to get a three-story building without the parapets and mechanical units being above the height restriction is with a flat roof, which may not be ideal. A gabled roof, with a 4-12 pitch, would be 39' to the middle or a two-story gable roof with a 4-12 pitch is 28'. This includes an 11' floor to floor and 2-foot roof clearance.

Matt Giffin explained that a two story 15-unit building would take up a significant amount of the site and there would not be room for an access road for fire access. A three-story structure would allow the square footage of the site to be reduced as they will go vertical and could potentially add an additional nine units.

Andrew Winter indicated that the two historic buildings at the front of the site will be renovated to make the buildings more energy efficient and make them ADA accessible. A portion of the units from the two historic buildings will be relocated to the new proposed building if the height allows for higher density.

Andrew Winter mentioned that there are currently 26-29 gravel lot parking spaces which is roughly a 1 to 1 parking ratio. The current regulations require 2 to 1 parking. (2 parking spaces per residential unit). Summerpark was 1.5 to 1 and the Town of Hanover approved the requirement be lowered it to 0.75 to 1 parking requirements. for senior housing projects. Andrew asked if the Planning Commission is willing to entertain the idea of allowing the proposed use of a 1 to 1 parking ratio to allow more space to build additional units.

Andrew Winter explained that the project was originally zoned for 16 units under base zoning and a 50% increase for affordable housing increased the density to 24 units for affordable housing. The property received a variance in the 1970s to increase to 26 units. Andrew Winters mentioned the variance needed to be considered when redesigning the property.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development performs an annual inspection of all HUD-funded buildings. HUD uses a scale of 1 to 100. HUD rated this property at 63. Andrew Winter explained that they can apply for funding/Federal tax credits once a year for construction and the deadline is January 2024 and would receive the results of the potential funding decision in April 2024.

Laura Powell asked if the desired roof pitch is 5-12/6-12, what is the total height that would equate to? Matt Giffin responded he will take alternative roof pitch measurements and send over.

Frank Horneck asked if the roof pitch will allow for the insulation, Matt Giffin responded yes, the higher the pitch will allow for proper efficiency and follow Energy Standards of Vermont as this is a state and federally funded project.

Susan Silberberg mentioned that having the plans in context would be useful and requests if the developers try to design more innovatively and not be limited by the site regulations, what would the results be. Susan Silberberg continues and asks if possible, to include workforce housing in this property rather than just 100% senior housing.

Andrew Winters mentioned that Woodstock has the site regulated as senior housing and HUD also has the site required to be used as senior housing. Matt Giffin responded to the zoning/site limitations and how that impacts the typical downtown design. He indicates the level of funding may play a role in how creative they can be and would like Woodstock to consider it. Susan Silberberg asked if there is alternative designs that can get more units. Andrew Winters suggested checking the Twin Pines Housing Trust website for an example of a newer Hartford building for chronically homeless 18 unit building that has dormers that take up a 3-story building and makes it appear like a 2 story.

Mary Margaret Sloan asked about the two-parking space per unit ratio and mentioned that the Commission is actively addressing parking. She asked if they must stay at 35 foot level, when is it not viable for Twin Pines to do the project. If it must stay at 35', is there a way to get around it?

Andrew Winter responded that it is possible but that the building footprint would need to be larger to fit 15 units. He mentioned there are ways to do it that reduce the visual impact, such as having the larger building in the rear behind the historical buildings in the front.

Brad Lawrence asked if at 35 feet, perhaps a flat roof would not be noticeable as it is tucked behind other buildings and the height of a pitched roof would stand out more. Matt Giffin indicated that elevators require a 4 feet over run and mechanical units on the roof such as 6 feet tall heat pumps, so parapets are added to hide these units. Matt Giffin inquires if 35 feet include the mechanical unit height too or if those will also need to be below the 35-foot clearance.

Steven Bauer mentioned that 40 feet is a proposed idea for the new height restrictions. Susan Silberburg asked what the next steps are needed to prepare for January funding date. Mary Margaret Sloan asked when changes needed to be made to meet the January deadline. Steven indicated that September 1, 2023 is the latest date to have an agreed upon draft from the Planning Commission to provide time to send them to Trustees for approval.

Mary Margaret Sloan asked to confirm the Twin Pines Housing Trust recommendations summary.

- Go down from 2 spaces to 1 space per unit

- Go up to 40 feet height from 35 foot building height restriction

Matt Winters agreed with those two but also adds a third – Density, stating that 24 units are allowed currently but with a variance, they could add more density. The Planned Residential Development zoning allows for an increase for 25% to 50% density improvement, would the town allow for 100% density variance for workforce housing or low-income housing uses. Current units are 1 bedroom, 600-650 square feet. Planned Residential density could be edited to allow for more units to be constructed.

Brad Lawrence asked for information regarding parking ratios for the subject specific site, Andrew Winter stated that the lot is roughly 75% empty on his drive by. Susan Silberberg added a question regarding a parking sharing agreement, and if that would be an option. Andrew Winters provided info that Lebanon Central Business District does not have parking minimum requirements, the Twin Pines Tracy Street project has one space per unit for workforce housing and do a sharing of handicap spaces with Mascoma bank next door as it is a good use of daytime and nighttime parking sharing.

### **Review Discuss and Rules and Procedures**

Mary Margaret Sloan discussed what the role of the Commission is and the Planning Director's role and how they interact. She would like to have the discussion and edit it later via Google Doc. Steven agreed with the idea of working on language and to have it in draft form for next meeting.

Laura Powell mentioned two items, first, other towns meet more frequently than once a month as an option to help keep meeting momentum, potentially for twice a month for a 1.5-hour meeting max. Laura continued that reestablishing what the roles and responsibilities to be are important currently. Laura Powell suggested that the accountability flows from voters at top, and then select board and trustees, followed by Planning and Zoning office and then under that is the various boards and commissions that fall under Planning and Zoning office.

Mary Margaret Sloan mentioned the former Planning Director Neil was the clerk and provided expertise, but agenda and decisions were made by the Commission with the advice and support of Neil. Susan Silberberg mentioned there was a lot of work between prior zoning officer and commission chair to prepare for the meetings and were in constant contact.

Mary Margaret mentioned Laura Powell was voted the clerk and it is not appropriate for a volunteer to be held accountable for compliance with open meeting laws. Laura Powell indicated that a clerk is someone who keeps information and is not responsible for law compliance and the Chair should be a collaborator with Steven Bauer who coordinates with the rest of the boards in town. Mary Margaret Sloan asked Steven Bauer, if possible, to get Two Rivers Planning Commission bylaws as an example. Steven Bauer agreed to provide that information.

Steven Bauer indicated that they will need to clarify going forward if the clerk can be a planning commission member or staff member.

Mary Margert Sloan asked about meeting more than once a month, Susan Silberburg proposed limiting meetings to 1.5 hours is a good idea but increasing the number of meetings per month

may make it harder to recruit new people to the Commission. Mary Margaret Sloan suggested that perhaps there is a way to conversion offline so that the meeting times do not need to increase. Steven clarified that the Commission is currently meeting for 3 hours per month, whether 2 meetings or one meeting, plus 3-6 additional hours is an additional reality of what it takes to be a Commissioner. Mary Margaret Sloan asked to set up a Google Doc and can take up at next meeting. Susan Silberberg asked for examples of other bylaws be added to the folder. Steven Bauer said he will add them as soon as possible.

## **Election of Officers and Terms**

Laura Powell asked whether it made sense to wait and agree to rules before electing new officers. Susan Silberberg agreed that the rules should be defined before an election vote. Steven Bauer said that a joint meeting on May 31<sup>st</sup> of the Select Board and Trustees will fill the Susan Boston vacancy. Mary Margaret asked if there can be a Planning Commission interview. Steven Bauer will set up an interview the week of May 22<sup>nd</sup> for the Planning Commission to meet the new candidate.

Mary Margaret Sloan would like to create an onboarding process for new members of the Planning Commission. Laura Powell mentioned she was on the Two Rivers site and mentioned that they offer training videos available online. Susan Silberberg mentioned the state has a packet available for info on serving on Planning Commission.

Steven suggested that candidates be given the packet before the interview to help candidates understand the role.

## **Village Sign Regulations and next steps**

- Steven Bauer mentioned the Commission can make recommendations on a change to the regulations to the trustees, but a variance must still go through the DRB for approval.
- Mary Margeart Sloan said that the Commission should consider the sign regulations after the housing draft is complete. Susan Silberberg supports that and agreed that if the signs can stay up in the process and wishes to keep projects on track. Steven Bauer said the temporary path forward is applying for a temporary variance from the DRB, however, that could be denied. Brad Lawrence asked if there is a way to support the sign with a statement to the VDRB by asking to approve the variance as the commission will be changing the sign regulations in the future. Steven Bauer mentioned they could make a 6-month waiver for sign regulations to give to VDRB in the meantime.
- Mary Margaret Sloan recommended discussing it at the next meeting. Frank Horneck suggested they create a universal sign policy for the community. Susan Silberberg would like a letter of support made; Brad also agreed that idea for when they put in their application and then take it up at the next meeting as needed.

## **Other Business**

None

Laura Powell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Frank Horneck seconded the motion.

**Vote 5-0. Approved. Adjourned 8:58pm.**