

WATERBURY PLANNING COMMISSION

Approved Minutes

Monday, February 27, 2017

Planning Commission: Chair: Ken Belliveau, Sarah McShane, Mary Koen.

Staff: Steve Lotspeich, Community Planner; Judi Byron, Secretary

Public: Zoe Gordon, Economic Development Director, Revitalizing Waterbury; Jeff Larkin, Chair, Waterbury Area Development Committee.

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:06 p.m. at the Municipal Center at 28 N. Main Street.

AGENDA REVIEW AND MODIFICATIONS

There were no changes made to the agenda.

COMMENTS FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC

There were no members of the public at the meeting to provide comments.

REVIEW DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Zoe Gordon stressed that the Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) is not a regulatory document but simply a road map to move economic development forward. These proposals are ideas to elicit questions, acknowledge the challenges, and push boundaries as a way to start a conversation.

There was considerable discussion around the use of the word “must” throughout the document and it was agreed to change the phrasing to a softer tone “well served to consider” or “should”.

Jeff Larkin offered the background on the document. The original draft that was written by the previous Economic Development Director, Darren Winham, was very specific and directive as a tool for economic development. It was framed to open up questions.

Ken pointed out that whether the EDSP is a framework or set of goals for economic development, this is a process; we don't know in advance what the outcome will be. There was agreement that there was too much emphasis on Route 100 development. Ken urged that the town's development should be carefully considered and that development be in sync with infrastructure. Steve concurred and said that the goals were well stated and generally the plan was good, but his concern was that the emphasis on the Route 100 corridor development is not consistent with the definition of “smart growth” in the EDSP where urban centers/villages are surrounded by more rural areas. He also pointed out that Waterbury Center village is our other growth center and pointed to various key existing businesses and Waterbury Center village's potential for development and re-development. Jeff pointed out that there has been a lot of interest in development in the Route 100 corridor by businesses but the proposed use doesn't fit under current Zoning Regulations. He asked, “Do we want to go parcel by parcel and have in-fill or do we preserve rural areas?” Steve made the point that current zoning supports clustering

more intense development, and to look at how Waterbury Center village can develop as a growth center. Zoe will add that piece to the document.

The conversation then turned to housing with Mary questioning the evidence of high housing cost. Ken pointed out the shortage of rental housing and Jeff mentioned the lack of diversity of housing in Waterbury. There needs to be affordability on both ends of the age spectrum as well as for the work force.

Ken questioned the lengthy list of entities identified for inclusion in the proposed Pre-Project Review Board, and whether they all had a role in the development review process. Ken discussed the need for a clearly articulated, predictable policy that was formulaic. This would simplify the process of determining the appropriateness and possible impacts of a proposed development. This would be built into one of the first steps of the development review process. Zoe replied that not everyone comes to the table on all these projects.

Ken questioned the potential conflict of interest if a Development Review Board member was part of the Pre-Project Review Board and they met behind closed doors. Steve agreed that a pre-development meeting, even with the Development Review Board, is a way to mitigate problems and discuss any important issues before a project goes through a formal review process. This is not usually a confidential or closed door process but it could be if necessary. He spoke of the current referral process to different municipal departments that serves part of this process. Sarah stressed the importance of some kind of technical review committee or process that is used in many municipalities. The question arose around zoning; does zoning need to be amended? Spot zoning is an important issue to consider according to Steve.

Steve encouraged Zoe to talk to Bill Shepeluk again about tax stabilization including the language in the draft EDSP. An example is, would the community support taxes for parking?

Ken suggested putting in a map or two for the Route 2 and 100 corridors. March 13th is the next Planning Commission meeting and Zoe and Jeff will come back with a revised draft with a focus on consistency. The Select Board and Trustees will ultimately be asked to adopt the plan.

REVIEW DRAFT CONSULTANT AGREEMENT FOR RE-WRITE OF ZONING REGULATIONS

Discussion ensued as to the role of the consultant with regards to the Community Survey. Does Brandy develop the questions for the survey or is that the PC's responsibility? It was agreed that the PC would outline the issues for the community survey, Brandy would craft the questions for PC review. On page 1 of the CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, under DUTIES, I. Consultant Responsibilities: COMMUNITY SURVEY, letter B. was changed to read "The consultant will work with the Planning Commission by drafting..." etc.

UPDATE ON LOCAL ENERGY PLANNING PROJECT

It was agreed that the PC solicit input at the LEAP Energy Fair at Crossett Brook Middle School on Saturday, April 8th.

The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission will be providing mapping of the town and where certain renewable energy generating facilities could be located, in April. CVRPC will assist the Town in writing a draft energy plan by the end of July, 2017, that can be incorporated later into our next Municipal Plan. Steve will also send a link to the PC of the mapping of renewable electrical generating facilities. This on-line mapping has been created using data from the Public Service Department which shows specific locations that are net metered.

OTHER BUSINESS:

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The draft minutes for February 13th were reviewed. Under REVIEW DRAFT APPLICATION FOR A DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION FUND GRANT, in the first paragraph, 5th line, Ken suggested specificity in reference to “next year”, to read “starting in 2018”.

MOTION:

Sarah McShane moved and Mary Koen seconded the motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes for February 13, 2017 with the changes specified.

VOTE: The motion was approved with a vote of 3-0.

PLANNERS REPORT

The consultant firm LandWorks has been hired to design the wayfinding signage that will be installed in conjunction with the Main St. Reconstruction project.

UPDATE ON STATE PERMITTING ACTIVITY

The Verizon cell tower proposed on North Hill is still being contested through the state Public Service Board application process. The Technical Hearing is scheduled the end of March.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Judi Byron
Secretary