

WATERBURY PLANNING COMMISSION

Approved Minutes

Monday, July 25, 2022

Planning Commission: Martha Staskus (Chair), Kati Gallagher (Vice Chair), Mary Koen, Eric Gross, Dana Allen

Staff: Steve Lotspeich (Planning and Zoning Director, Zoning Administrator)

Public: Alyssa Johnson (Waterbury Select Board), Billy Vigdor (Chair, Conservation Commission), Linda Gilpin (Conservation Commission)

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the Steele Community Room, 28 N. Main St. and via ZOOM.

AGENDA REVIEW AND MODIFICATIONS

The agenda was approved as drafted.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Billy Vigdor introduced himself as the current Chair of the Waterbury Conservation Commission. He discussed a number of initiatives that the Conservation is working on and their desire to coordinate some of these with the Planning Commission. It was agreed set up a time to have Conservation Commission members attend a Planning Commission meeting to present and discuss their planning and zoning related initiatives.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

The draft minutes for the meetings held on May 23, June 13, and July 11, 2022 were reviewed.

MOTION:

Eric Gross moved and Dana Allen seconded the motion to approve the minutes of May 23, June 13, and July 11, 2022, as amended.

VOTE: The motion was approved 4 – 0. (Mary Koen had not arrived at the meeting at this time.)

DISCUSSION OF CVRPC ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER

The position of Alternate Commissioner for the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) Board was discussed. The Select Board appoints a person to this position for a one-year term. The PC recommends approaching Neal Leitner to see if he is interested in serving in that position. Alyssa Johnson is interested in serving in the position. This will be discussed again at the PC meeting on August 8th.

DISCUSSION OF THE SELECT BOARD HOUSING TASK FORCE

Dana reported on the discussion of the Housing Task Force at the last Select Board (SB) meeting. The SB is looking for guidance on the make-up of the Task Force and will be discussing the topic again at their meeting on August 1st. Alyssa and Steve will be meeting this week to discuss the Task Force and will develop a list of groups that should be represented and will bring a list to recommend to the Select Board. This list should include representatives from the private housing development sector and the homeless population.

DISCUSS WATERBURY PARKS STUDY STEERING COMMITTEE

Steve gave an update on the Parks Study / Master Plan for Hope Davey Park and the vicinity of the Ice Center. He explained that the composition of the Steering Committee was established by the Select Board. The Planning Commission is encouraged to participate in the study and all the meetings of the Steering Committee are open to the public. There will be an early evening “visioning” event for the study in early September and the PC will be invited to attend.

CONTINUED REVIEW OF DRAFT UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT BYLAW – PHASE #1 (UDB-P1)

The review of Section 1606.2, Dimensional Table was continued for the R-10 zoning district. Dana presented his data for the proposed R-10 zoning district that includes information about approximate average acreage of about 1/3 acre per parcel, excluding the larger publicly or utility-owned parcels, and approximate lot coverage percentage. Kati presented her display of research on existing and proposed density and photos of properties in the proposed Mixed-Use and R-10 zoning districts. She referred to the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development’s publication “Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods” regarding residential density.

The use of lot coverage as a way to control residential density rather than sq. ft. of lot area per dwelling unit was discussed. The use of design review criteria to assure that new development is appropriate and fits the character of the area was discussed. Steve recollected that the draft historic district review bylaws that were drafted in 2019 and 2020 included some of the proposed R-10 areas and were put on hold as a result of opposition from affected property owners.

As a next step, Dana offered to provide some additional data on lot coverage in the proposed R-10 zoning district for the next PC meeting. Steve will research the Stowe development bylaws regarding residential density, especially for the cottage development in the Lower Village area near the fire station, and will share that information with the PC prior to the next meeting. It was noted that there is Section 1609, Downtown Review Overlay District bylaws in the UDB-P1 that include design review and demolition standards and should be reviewed in the context of possibly using lot coverage to control residential density.

It was suggested that PC members could walk some of the proposed R-10 zoning district areas prior to the next PC meeting to get a sense of what doubling or quadrupling the density of dwelling units might look like.

The other three bullets on this agenda item were tabled until the next PC meeting.

OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION BUSINESS

Planning & Zoning Director’s Report:

- The PC Secretary position has been advertised again on Front Porch Forum since no-one has applied for the position yet. Steve will continue to post the position on the municipal website and additional times on Front Porch Forum.
- The Town was successful in moving from being a one-acre to being a ten-acre municipality for Act 250 jurisdiction for non-residential development. This determination was made by the general counsel for the state Natural Resources Board after reviewing a lengthy questionnaire documenting the compliance of our bylaws with state statute.

- A zoning permit application has been received for a three-lot subdivision of the former Sayah farm on Route 100. The two southerly parcels will have a building for the Waterbury Ambulance Service, Inc. (WASI) and a separate building for Copley Health Systems, Inc., There is no current proposed development on the northerly remaining portion of the Sayah property.

Mary Koen raised a concern about the process for reviewing decisions on the UDB-P1 that are documented in the minutes of each PC meeting. It was agreed that once the entire UDB-P1 draft is completed, there will be a process for the PC to review the entire draft and make any subsequent changes. If sections of the draft are approved at a given meeting when a member is absent, that member can request an explanation at the subsequent meeting or contact the Chair or another PC member for an explanation. The PC meetings are not currently being recorded but it is possible to record any PC meeting through Zoom and make that recording available for a month or more after that particular meeting.

It was announced that the 51 S. Main St. parcel, the site of the former Municipal Office Building, is being discussed at the meeting of the Edward Farrar Utility District, owner of the parcel, on August 10, 2022. The proposal is to donate or sell the parcel to Downstreet Housing and Community Development for the construction of an affordable housing project.


NEXT MEETING

The next regular PC meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 8, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The PC meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Steve Lotspech, Acting Secretary