

WATERBURY PLANNING COMMISSION
Approved Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 8, 2017

Planning Commission: Ken Belliveau, Chair; Mary Koen, Eric Gross.

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

Public: Lovell Beaulieu, Waterbury Record

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Center at 28 North Main Street.

AGENDA REVIEW AND MODIFICATIONS

There were no changes made to the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC

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

Steve introduced Eric Gross as the newest member of the Planning Commission and referred to Mark Ray, an applicant to the Commission and co-owner of Stowe Cider. (He will be interviewing with the Select Board for the 5th position on the Planning Commission in early June.) Eric lives in downtown Waterbury, grew up in Montpelier, spent time in California, worked for H&R Block and is happy to be in Waterbury where he feels a sense of community, likes the downtown area and being able to walk. He is a business owner (owns two duplexes) and is eager to learn about the Planning Commission. Mary was happy for another village resident to be part of the PC.

Ken explained the Planning Commission's role was as a policy board, to draft and make recommendations for plans and regulations to the Select Board and to the Trustees.

RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE WATERBURY ZONING REGULATIONS

Brandy Saxton of Place Sense has offered to re-organize the Waterbury Zoning Regulations as part of the Municipal Planning Grant funded project to re-write certain chapters in the Regulations. The PC looked at the table of contents for the Draft Barre City Unified Development Ordinance that Brandy forwarded to the Commission to get ideas on how to potentially reorganize the regulations.

Steve gave a brief history of the Waterbury Zoning Regulations. In March, 1980 they were established in both the Town and Village. The last major re-organization of the Regulations was in 1994. There have been a series of amendments over the following years including the Telecommunications Bylaws in 1999, the Ridgeline, Hillside, Steep Slope regulations in the mid-2000s, The Downtown Design Review Overlay District in 2006, and the Subdivision Chapter in early 2013. Before 1994, regulations were organized by zoning district, identifying the permitted and conditional uses by district.

The disadvantage of the current approach with the Use Regulation Table is that if a use does not fit into “cubby hole”, how is it categorized?

Steve talked of the ramifications of re-organizing and changing our Zoning Districts. For example further limiting density or allowed used in a given area or “downzoning” can affect property values and potentially be considered a taking. Thus simply limiting uses or simplifying the Zoning Districts could alienate landowners.

Steve gave the history of the consolidation of our review process under the one Development Review Board that was established in 2012. Previously, the Planning Commission conducted Site Plan Review for Town and Village applications and the separate Village and Town Zoning Boards of Adjustment conducted reviews such as Conditional Use, Variance, Flood Hazard, and Ridgeline, Hillside, Steep Slope. The Zoning Regulations of Town and Village merged in 1994, and chapters for various types of review were added over the years, including those for overlay districts. Brandy has suggested that the Commission consider merging or consolidating some of these types of reviews and the overlay districts in to one Chapter to reduce redundancy in the Regulations.

There was discussion of how to make the document clearer to the layperson who might be applying and also for the people who use the document on a routine basis. Steve suggested having the administrative process up front in the Regulations. Ken suggested having chapters rather than articles and repaginating the document by chapter i.e. 1-1, 1-2, 2-1, 2-2 etc. This makes it much easier to amend chapters in the future and not have to repaginate the entire document as a result.

Mary suggested having a joint meeting with the Development Review Board to discuss the Zoning re-write and get their input early in the process. Steve will see if the DRB can join the Planning Commission for one of the upcoming meetings on May 22nd or June 12th, and get back to the Commission with the date.

LOCAL ENERGY PLANNING PROJECT WITH CVRPC STAFF

Steve reported on the training last week with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. Waterbury is one of three municipalities that have been chosen to work with the RPC and Eric Vorwald, Senior Planner with the CVRPC. The other two communities are East Montpelier and Barre Town.

Steve mentioned the set of maps and data that is available on the CVRPC’s website. The usage data for different types of energy (electricity, fuel, propane, wood, and biomass) is measured in megawatt hours. Because different types of energy has different efficiencies, this measurement is for that amount of energy used for one hour, whether kilowatt or megawatt.

The state’s deadline for completing the draft local energy plans is July 31st of this year. This will give Waterbury “substantial deference” in the Public Service Board review of energy generation projects proposed in Waterbury. What Eric Vorwald stressed at the training was that we may already have many goals, objectives, and actions in the current Municipal Plan that meet the

required state energy standards. Steve gave the Energy Chapter in the Municipal Plan as an example, but the goals, etc. can be located in other chapters in the Plan. He then turned to the subject of state goals and targets according to Act 174 passed last year, with the goal of having 90% renewable energy generation/use by 2050 in Vermont. We can address the question, "What is a good mix of energy generation for Waterbury? One issue is whether we want to encourage or discourage industrial scale wind generation. Mary asked how the PC would reach the state's goals. How specific do we need to be? What is our timeline? The goal is to have our local energy plan incorporated into the Municipal Plan that needs to be re-approved by December, 2018.

Steve suggested that representatives from the Waterbury Local Energy Action Partnership (LEAP) come to one of the PC's upcoming meetings to participate in the discussion and help develop our energy plan.

Steve pointed to page 5 of the Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans document as a check list to meet the plan requirements. He also pointed to the Pathways (or Implementation Actions) on page 6 and posed the question again, "What pathways will work for Waterbury?" Page 7 points to the list of the action items that should be done. Ken spoke of promoting the town's leadership role in energy conservation.

Steve again reiterated how much has already been incorporated into the various chapters of the Municipal Plan. Ken mentioned that all the required energy elements in the Municipal Plan can be in different chapters such as transportation and land use. Eric Vorwald with CVRPC has offered to do an assessment of where we already meet the standards and then identify where the gaps exist. Steve encouraged the Planning Commission members to read through the Energy Planning Standards to be prepared. The environmental constraints maps for the different types of energy generation should be examined to help us decide where we want to encourage or discourage different types of facilities such as large solar arrays. We are waiting on better electrical usage data that is being provided by Efficiency Vermont.

OTHER BUSINESS

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION:

Mary Koen moved and Eric Gross seconded the motion to approve the Planning Commission Minutes for April 24, 2017 as amended.

VOTE: The motion passed 3-0.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR'S AND PLANNER'S REPORT

The Zoning Administrator's report for the month of April was handed out and discussed. Steve said that the Economic Development Strategic Plan prepared by Zoe Gordon, the Economic Development Director, and the Waterbury Area Development Committee was endorsed by the Village Trustees with condition that the Plan is not a regulatory document. This Plan will go to the Select Board as well for them to consider endorsing the Plan.

UPDATE ON STATE PERMITTING ACTIVITY

An Act 250 Administrative Amendment has been issued for the proposed picnic shelter at Dascomb Rowe Field near the Municipal Center. Ken asked about the maximum hours for lights for the field. The lights are now on a timer and are shut-off at 10 p.m.

A wetland permit for a solar array on Maggie's Way was approved.

Regarding the proposed Verizon North Hill cell tower, the submission of briefs from all interested parties is due in early June with responses due by the end of June. After that process is complete, the Public Service Board will make its decision.

The Planning and Zoning Forum will take place on June 14th in Fairlee, VT, and all Commissioners were invited to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Judi Byron, Secretary