



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Type:..... **Special**
Date:..... **Tuesday, September 8, 2015**
Time:..... **7:00 p.m.**
Place:..... **Municipal Building Community Room**
Address:..... **43 Bombardier Road, Milton, Vermont 05468-3205**
Contact:..... **(802) 893-1186**
Website:..... **miltonvt.org**

1 **1. CALL TO ORDER**

2 The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.
3

4 **2. ATTENDANCE**

5 **Members Present:** Lori Donna, Chair; Julie Rutz, Vice-Chair; Tony Micklus; and Henry Bonges

6 **Members Absent:** John Lindsay

7 **Staff Present:** Jacob Hemmerick, Planning Director; Brandy Saxton, PlaceSense Consultant

8 **Regional Planning Commission Planners Present:** Regina Mahoney and Lee Krohn

9 **Public Present:** none
10

11 **3. AGENDA REVIEW**

12 No changes to the Agenda were proposed.
13

14 **4. PUBLIC FORUM**

15 None.
16

17 **5. STAFF UPDATE**

18 Hemmerick updated the Planning Commission on Department staffing developments, stating that the
19 Zoning Administrator is currently working part-time and in the near future will be on new-parent leave.
20 During this time Hemmerick will serve as the Acting Zoning Administrator. This reinforces the need for a
21 Municipal Planning Grant (MPG), which would be used to contract the services of a consultant.

22 Hemmerick is working on the MPG application. Staff also noted that Capital Improvement Plan budgeting
23 is coming up and recommended that Commissioners consider any such items that they'd like to present at
24 their next meeting. Staff then briefly reviewed recent Development Review Board (DRB) activity: the DRB
25 approved an Interim Zoning application for expansion of self-storage on Centre Drive, approved the
26 Stannard House subdivision, approved a Boundary Line Adjustment on Cold Spring Road and approved
27 an expansion at NG Advantage. Staff noted that the Grand Isle Planning Commission has issued their
28 warning for their Town Plan, and Zoning and Subdivision Regulation amendments, and have filed them
29 with according to statue.
30

31 **6. BUSINESS**

32
33 **6(A). Bylaw Technical Review**
34

35 Donna gave a recap of the work that has occurred over the last several months and at the last few
36 meetings, and Brandy Saxton of Place Sense gave a summary of her understanding of the project and what
37 she would like to do next. Specifically, Saxton expressed an interest in discussing the residential
38 component of the Commission's overall vision. There was general agreement regarding the vision for the
39 Town Core, and that more discussion needs to occur regarding development outside of the Core. Saxton
40 stated that some of the material presented for Traditional Neighborhood Bylaws could potentially replace

1 some of Milton's current PUD language which has not always been completely effective in achieving the
2 desired outcome. Saxton noted that the different examples provided, illustrate that these can be adapted to
3 a smaller scale and for Milton's specific needs, citing the Randolph zoning language as an example and a
4 larger study from Maine that included helpful pictures and illustrations.
5

6 Staff stated that the key policy questions to guide the next discussion are, "How does the Planning
7 Commission view residential within the downtown and downtown periphery?" and "What outcomes
8 would you like to see in Zoning Districts M4, M5 and M6?" Saxton noted that few parcels in those districts
9 large enough to design a neighborhood; which means the Commission is looking at more of an infill
10 development scenarios. Donna agreed and stated that she had noticed, in her review of the materials, they
11 seem to apply to a much larger scale than the core downtown area the Board currently has envisioned;
12 thus the Commission may need to look at areas outside the core for residential planning. The Commission
13 did not object to a TND approach.
14

15 Donna stated that one high priority is developing a comprehensive approach to address the Land Use
16 Permit conditions resulting from the Conservation Law Foundations (CLF) appeal of the Town's sewer
17 expansion. Donna inquired about the Zoning Map, and Saxton commented that redistricting could be an
18 important piece in resolving the issues with CLF, adding that the Zoning Map is a powerful visual cue on
19 what is and is not developable given natural resource constraints. The visual of large parcels that are
20 undevelopable gives a false impression. Saxton stated that updating the map is an effective way to depict
21 more realistic development scenario.
22

23 The Commission further discussed the merits and drawbacks and advantages of an official map in relation
24 to this project. Staff noted that this is a component of the State's growth center designation program, and
25 asked how the community could benefit from such a designation. The Regional Planners and Saxton noted
26 that the process is long, and the community is rational in weighing the benefits to the community.
27

28 Hemmerick then summarized the Commission's priorities as understood by staff: concern about
29 incompatible uses; concentrating certain uses within the DB1 such as restaurants, retail, and services;
30 reconsidering auto-dependent uses and services in the DB1 for prioritization in the adjacent, transitional
31 areas; reaffirming a traditional pedestrian downtown corridor within the DB1 near the hourglass; and
32 possibly prioritizing similar commercial village-style development at the bottom of river street. Staff also
33 suggested considering commercial crossroads for neighborhood commerce in Checkerberry, for which the
34 Donna expressed some concern about access and Bonges had concerns about making existing commercial
35 development located outside of the defined downtown or nodes non-conforming and the likelihood for
36 redevelopment. The Commission then discussed desired development outcomes versus the reality of the
37 economy and other factors. Donna stated that commercial development should be strongly related to job
38 creation. Staff further summarized the Commission's interest in site development, streetscape and
39 building standards, particularly along US Route 7.
40

41 Krohn stated that he sensed that Milton is at a turning point, and that the Town is realizing that some
42 things aren't working in terms of development. At some point, decisions regarding change need to be
43 made and it must be acknowledged that change won't occur overnight. He mentioned three interlocking
44 areas that have been discussed: 1) an official map, 2) land use changes along the corridor, and 3) what will
45 the new corridor look like and how will it feel? He addressed Bonges' concerns about existing businesses
46 with an anecdote about his experience in Manchester, where new development required the incremental
47 installation of a sidewalk, sometimes mocked for its patchwork approach, but slowly filled in. Krohn

1 stated that it's important to step back and ask yourself how you want it to look 50 or 100 years from now,
2 and subsequently, how to incent developers to build to the vision.
3

4 Saxton discussed transition districts, citing Bennington design guidelines as a good example of applicable
5 language. She also indicated that the materials she provided regarding Middlebury's access management
6 and highway corridor information are real-world examples that the Commission may find particularly
7 useful, especially because they are along US Route 7.
8

9 Staff advised that there will eventually be a concrete proposal for Bonges to review, with Saxton agreeing
10 that the type of broad discussion currently occurring is actually quite helpful. Saxton added that policy
11 discussions such as these are integral, because crafting Zoning language is time consuming and detail
12 oriented, and you must be sure you're heading in the desired direction before taking on the costly and
13 lengthy process of actually writing the regulations.
14

15 Krohn spoke of one good way they obtained feedback in Manchester: by physically walking around town
16 and determining patterns that people actually liked, and then crafting the Zoning language around those
17 patterns. This method retains and builds upon existing, desirable, real-world features and can be quite
18 beneficial.
19

20 Donna guided the discussion back to the residential piece of the zoning changes, as that is the area that
21 Saxton has requested further guidance on. Donna added that Village residents paid an additional tax and
22 therefore are heavily invested in this residential section of town, herself included. Donna said that she sees
23 this area as a good place to continue to invest in for residential uses, and that it has strong residential infill
24 potential.
25

26 Mahoney asked about any Interim Zoning deadlines, and Staff advised that the timeline for Interim Zoning
27 was originally expected to be 18 months, of which 6 months have already passed. This leaves
28 approximately 12 months to finish this project, though there is a possibility of an extension if needed.
29 Saxton advised that she thinks the Commission has made progress and really focused the scope of the
30 project over the last several months, and thinks 12 months is not out of the question. Saxton added that the
31 adoption of new Zoning Regulations might not occur in that timeframe, but that having regulations
32 drafted in 12 months is a reasonable expectation. She explained, however, that an official map could take
33 twelve months in and of itself. Saxton discussed the timeline for the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) and
34 structuring the zoning changes; she advised that discussions need to take place regarding the pros and
35 cons of adopting all proposed zoning changes at once versus adopting them piecemeal. This is largely a
36 pragmatic decision. Saxton explained how this could tie in to the MPG. Staff stated the greater the change
37 in regulations, the greater the need to keep the public informed and involved. Donna agreed and stated
38 the Town has been striving to keep communication open. Krohn shared some of his experience with public
39 outreach, advising that addressing the Rotary, for example, and other clubs and groups provides an
40 opportunity for one on one discussion and can also be useful in stopping the dissemination of incorrect
41 information and rumors. Saxton agreed, stating that outreach consists of going out to talk to the people,
42 not asking the people to come talk to you.
43

44 Saxton gave a brief synopsis of the materials she provided to the Commission, emphasizing the importance
45 of development standards versus uses. Krohn agreed and wanted to further emphasize that the use of a
46 structure is not necessarily the most important aspect; the most important aspect can be how it is
47 developed and that it is built for the long-term.
48

1 Donna asked if the Commission had any other questions or comments for Saxton and there were none at
2 that time. Staff inquired whether or not the Commission felt their policy priorities had been captured and
3 understood correctly. Thanks were extended to Saxton, Mahoney and Krohn for their knowledge and
4 guidance throughout this process.
5

6 Some discussion ensued regarding community network mapping, and the importance of doing so. It was
7 also remarked upon that the support of other boards is important. The possibility of doing a press release
8 as an update to the community was discussed. It was agreed that social mapping is a good next step.
9

10 **6(B). Public Service Board Notice of Petition for Proposed Lamoille River Solar LLC Array**

11 Staff gave a recap of the two potential issues that were identified at the Commission's last meeting: soil
12 quality and decommissioning of the array. Bonges clarified that the Commission wants to verify that upon
13 decommissioning, the land will be returned to its original state. Staff stated there was plenty of time to
14 compose a letter requesting this info. Staff advised that some of the land was considered Statewide
15 Agricultural soil, but none was classified as Prime Agricultural soil. Donna commented that this was her
16 major concern and she still had some concern over the Statewide Ag soil because the project is so big.
17 Micklus stated he had no problem with it, as it's not even being farmed now. Donna advised that it is
18 currently used as a hay field. In summary, Staff noted that a letter will be drafted concerning the
19 decommissioning, and presented to the Commission at the next meeting.
20

21 **7. Approval of Minutes**

22
23 **7(A) Minutes of August 18, 2015:**

24 Donna noted that the date of the next meeting as stated in Item 6E was incorrect. The draft minutes stated
25 the date as September 10, 2015 and the correct date is actually September 8, 2015. MOTION by Micklus to
26 approve the minutes of August 18, 2015 as amended. SECOND by Rutz. Unanimously APPROVED.
27

28 **8. ADJOURNED**

29 MOTION by Micklus to adjourn at 8:40 p.m., SECOND by Rutz. Unanimously APPROVED.
30

31 Minutes approved by the Commission this _____ day of _____, 2015.
32
33

34
35 _____
36 Lori Donna, Chair

/kt

37 Filed with the Town Clerk this 14th day of September, 2015