



MILTON PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Type: **Regular**
Date: **Tuesday, April 5, 2016**
Time: **6:30 p.m.**
Place: **Municipal Building Community Room**
Address: **43 Bombardier Road Milton, VT 05468**
Contact: **(802) 893-1186**
Website: **www.miltonvt.org**

1 **1. CALL TO ORDER**

2 The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
3

4 **2. ATTENDANCE & INTRODUCTIONS**

5 **Members Present:** Lori Donna, Chair; Julie Rutz, Vice-Chair; Tony Micklus, Clerk; Henry Bonges; John
6 Lindsay.

7 **Members Absent:** None.

8 **Staff Present:** Jacob Hemmerick, Planning Director; Brandy Saxton, PlaceSense consultant

9 **Public Present:** Ann Bradshaw, Kym Duchesneau, Steve Duchesneau, Ben Nappi, Gisela Alpert, Carly
10 Buswell, Robert Brisson, Laura Buswell, Al Russell and Jeff Thompson.

11
12 **3. AGENDA REVIEW**

13 The Commissioners, Staff and the public in attendance introduced themselves to one another. The Chair
14 reviewed the Agenda.
15

16 **4. WORKSHOP GROUND RULES**

17 Staff gave a brief summary of the Workshop ground rules for a productive, respectful meeting.
18

19 **5. DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT COMMUNITY WORKSHOP**

20 **5(A). Bylaw Amendment Project Introduction & Background**

21 Hemmerick presented a short history of the proposed bylaw amendments:

- 22 • This is not a new vision for the Town: the language/goals have been around since at least the late
23 1990's, with study after study reinforcing the community's wishes for a vibrant, walk-able
24 downtown.
- 25 • In the summer of 2014, this project got rolling in its early stages. Concerns regarding recent patterns
26 of development led to the implementation of an Interim Zoning Bylaw, which was adopted by the
27 Selectboard on April 7, 2015.
- 28 • The Planning Commission will continue working on the proposed revisions for the next several
29 months, through November 2016, and aims to put the newly drafted revisions to a hearing shortly
30 thereafter.
31

32 **5(B). Presentation on Draft Downtown Business District Language**

33 Saxton followed up the Introduction with a presentation of the draft language. Saxton explained that there
34 were concerns about the quality, scale and character of construction occurring in areas of town that the
35 town has significantly invested in, particularly in terms of infrastructure such as municipal water and sewer
36 service. Saxton explained how downtowns have a measurable built form that can be supported by
37 standards for size, mass, scale and other building details. Saxton noted that many existing downtown areas
38 have traditional old, brick buildings and advised that these buildings are still in place because they were
39 well-built and adaptable, and therefore were able to be repurposed over the years. Conversely, modern

1 construction is sometimes designed for one use and to convey a consistent branding message. The result is
2 a building that is not adaptable to re-use and therefore sits empty or is demolished.

3
4 Saxton pointed out the main themes of the proposed revisions:

- 5 • encouraging commercial development while allowing for residential units above;
- 6 • clarification of the density calculations;
- 7 • mixed-use by right;
- 8 • auto-oriented, and warehouse/storage Uses are encourage to be outside of the downtown district;
- 9 • Small scale (less than 6000 square feet) retail shops would be encouraged; and
- 10 • more predictable outcomes.

11
12 Saxton mentioned that some of the more impactful changes are found in the Dimensional Standards: they
13 are becoming clearer and more specific. The proposal includes minimum and maximum setbacks, built-to-
14 lines, height, footprint, lot coverage and building coverage. Saxton explained how all of these factor in to a
15 the creation of an identifiable and functional downtown district. Also important are site development
16 standards (which Saxton clarified do not apply to single family dwellings). Typical downtown site plan
17 standards encourage elements such as storefront display windows, porches, changes in wall plan and form,
18 outdoor seating, and parking to the side and rear of the building. Saxton shared several photos to illustrate
19 these concepts.

20 21 **5(C). Group Discussion and Feedback**

22 The Chair reminded the audience that the focus tonight was the DB1 district and that the Commission is
23 eager to hear all comments.

24
25 Russell wondered, based on a graphic presented, if taller buildings will be set behind shorter buildings.
26 Saxton explained that there is a greater height is allowed for buildings past a 40' setback.

27
28 Russell felt the proposal was very promising and that it was nice to see the Town headed in this direction.
29 He felt that the Zoning Regulations should include more drawings and/or photos because they quickly
30 convey what is desired and what is not, which is often lost in the language to the average user. Russell also
31 felt that energy efficiency should be encouraged. Russell noted that some of these standards represent a big
32 step for this community, and he expressed concern about the DRB's ability and willingness to apply the
33 standards.

34
35 Alpert stated the team had done a fantastic job and that the proposed language looks great. She wondered
36 how the project correlates with the "Milton: Defining Downtown from the Diner to the Dam" (M4D) project.
37 As a member of the M4D panel, Bonges was ready to speak to this issue and explained how the projects are
38 related and complementary.

39
40 Alpert asked how long interim zoning is in place. The Chair explained that Interim Zoning was put in place
41 for 2 years, giving it an expiration of April 2017, and that it can be extended for one year. However, the
42 Planning Commission is trying to lift it within 18 months of its effective date. Alpert inquired about the
43 overall process of revising Zoning Regulations; the Chair explained the process. Hemmerick advised there
44 will be another workshop in July focusing on the Checkerberry area, and that in the fall the formal adoption
45 process begins. The adoption process includes warned hearings by both the Planning Commission and the
46 Selectboard, and there will be many opportunities for further comments.

1 The Buswells expressed some concern about residential above commercial, as Carly Buswell has had some
2 negative experiences with such an arrangement as a local business owner. Buswell wondered if permitted
3 uses will be expanded, and how the proposed revisions may affect current businesses, moving forward.
4 She noted a lack of quality small retail units available to local businesses. Saxton explained that all existing
5 development is "grandfathered" and could therefore continue operating as-is. Expansion would be subject
6 to non-conforming provisions. The Chair acknowledged the Buswells' concerns, and a brief discussion of
7 multi-family housing units above commercial units was held. There was interest in ensuring that the
8 standards addressed compatibility issues between commercial and residential uses.

9
10 Bob Brisson expressed concern that developers will not want to build to these standards, as he's already
11 seen several vacant lots for sale around town and wonders why developers would rather sell their own
12 land, than develop it. Brisson asked how the Town is going to incentivize this. Staff acknowledged this is a
13 valid concern that's been discussed, and there are no easy answers. Alpert felt that once the M4D project is
14 completed, it will provide a clear visual change, and perhaps the rest will follow.

15
16 Duscheneau commented that from a recreational point of view, she'd like to see more bike racks, pocket
17 parks, and other amenities to encourage and support recreation. This was generally agreed upon and
18 Saxton advised that these are addressed in more depth in the DB1 Site Standards, which weren't discussed
19 in detail at this particular meeting.

20
21 When asked why downtown's are important, the group acknowledged the economic importance of having
22 a concentrated place where you can park and run errands. Bradshaw felt that the ability to park your car
23 and walk to 3 or 4 different places really makes a place a "destination." She has seen the transformation
24 first-hand, giving an example from a former hometown, and is very encouraged by what she saw at
25 tonight's meeting.

26
27 The following words were repeated throughout the evening by most of the people in attendance:

- 28 • shopping
- 29 • walkable
- 30 • compact
- 31 • plants/landscaping
- 32 • outdoor dining
- 33 • overdue
- 34 • encouraging
- 35 • fantastic
- 36 • exciting
- 37 • finally!

38
39 **6. ADJOURNED**

40 ADJOURNED by UNANIMOUS consent.

41
42 **Minutes approved by the Commission this _____ day of _____, 2016.**

43
44
45
46 _____
47 **Lori Donna, Chair**

/kt

48 **Draft filed with the Town Clerk this _____ day of _____, 2016.**

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2 **Filed with the Town Clerk this _____ day of _____, 2016.**
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