

Draft Minutes

**Middlesex Planning Commission
Wednesday, January 18, 2017 6:00 PM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915**

Planning Commission Members

John Krezinski, Chair
Barry Bolio
Steven Martin
Troy Sumner

Guests

Eric Vorwald
Marian Wolz

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. Welcoming guests Eric Vorwald and Marian Wolz both from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

The draft minutes for the December 14, 2016 regular meeting were approved unanimously by all Planning Commission members in attendance.

It was decided that the electronic taping/recording of Planning Commission meetings will be suspended. The use of the Apple Note application from the December 18th meeting was very garbled and was not helpful in the preparation of the December 18th draft minutes. The Planning Commission members will continue to research this and will hopefully find a suitable product to aide in the electronic recording/taping of Planning Commission meetings in the future.

The chair welcomed Eric Vorwald, Senior Planner and Marian Wolz, Assistant Planner from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission to provide consultation of the current Middlesex Town Plan. Eric advised that he and Marian were here this evening to provide an enhanced consultation. The areas to be discussed during this consultation would be:

- The 2013 Middlesex Town Plan, including analysis of items of statutory changes to consider for the plan update

- Any Training needs that may be of interest
- Services Provided by the CVRPC
- Other items of interest to the Planning Commission

Marian began by advising that updates to statute now require an element related to flood resiliency within the municipal plan and the Town Plan will be required to include information describing how the town could benefit from the designation. The town is also required to document that it has reviewed and is actively engaged in a process to implement its plan.

Marian then touched upon the strengths of the current Town Plan. How it notes and promotes the discussion of future infrastructure needs. Specifically referencing the lack of public water and sewage systems as well as suitable areas for construction or expansion of infrastructure, particularly relating to in-ground septic systems. The current plan notes support for agricultural and silviculture industries. There is a strong emphasis on the protection and promotion of public lands for use as active and passive recreation, with a strong commitment to preserving forest lands for future use. Another strength of the current plan is the strong commitment from the community to work with private landowners to protect important historic resources and structures. The Town Plan also meets statutory requirements by recommending the use of current energy supplies more efficiently and promoting sustainable development practices. The Town Plan also provides a strong commitment to smart growth principals that discourage strip development.

Marian then went through some of the weakness of the current Town Plan. Advising that a future land map should be included to graphically represent where Middlesex envisions land uses being located in the future to better plan for growth and increase standing in the Act 250 & Section 248 processes. It was also noted that additional information should be included to historic and natural features to define what “significant”, “outstanding”, and “important” mean to the community. The current Town Plan includes limited discussion related to housing for the elderly. If no housing exists or is proposed, it should be noted accordingly in the plan. Another point that was brought up was, that air quality is discussed however there are no measures identified as to how the air quality could be improved. There is no discussion on floodplain protection, this is now required by statute and can simply be address via the hazard mitigation plan. Marian also noted there was limited discussion in the current Town Plan as it relates to local food production of food or encouragement of local food systems.

Marian concluded this portion of the consultation, stating that when developing the updated Town Plan, if a topic has no significance to the town, than there is no need to go into great depth explaining why. Simply stating that “there is no significance” will be sufficient.

Lastly Marian detailed where the current Town Plan has opportunities for improvement. The first point was that a capital improvements plan could help Middlesex prioritize its future planning needs and goals, potentially identifying funding sources, cost needed to complete the identified projects and timeframes. As mentioned earlier in the presentation, it’s now required by state statute that there be a discussion of flood resiliency in the updated Town Plan and

should address vulnerabilities and how to mitigate those vulnerabilities with the community. Also the updated Town Plan will be required to include discussion of forest connectivity and integrity along with the Land Cover and Natural Resources map. An energy plan could also be written and added to the updated Town Plan, this section should include renewable energy siting in terms of where it is encouraged or discouraged throughout the community. This should be supported by through energy resource maps and zoning bylaw changes. A suggestion that additional maps be included to identify future recreation connections or needs would further emphasize the importance of recreation to the community. The next opportunity discussed, suggested that the Town Plan identify and map future infrastructure needs such as wastewater allocations. This may help support community goals for focusing development in the village. Along with this, the Town should continue to pursue funding for a preliminary design for a water system that was determined using the 2001 Middlesex/Exit 9 Land Use Plan. Marian also notes that an update to the 2001 Middlesex/Exit 9 Land Use Plan would help the town plan for future development, infrastructure and land use needs. It was suggested that the updated Town Plan include maps that show specific natural, environmental or historical resources within the community, these maps would help prioritize where growth and development should be encouraged or discouraged and again this is where words such as “significant”, “outstanding”, and “important” should be applied. Middlesex should also consider applying for village center designation to support and show the importance of the village in the community. The village center designation will also elevate the status of the community when applying for grants and other funding opportunities. Lastly it was noted that discussion on bicycle and pedestrian facilities would benefit the community and show a commitment to establishing a pedestrian friendly community.

At the conclusion of the presentation, it was determined that links of the Municipal Planning Manual along with information regarding data sources and public engagement methods would be a good resources to have while updating the Town Plan.

There was no other business to discuss and the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 PM

These minutes were prepared by Barry Bolio, acting Planning Commission Secretary.