

Draft Minutes

Meeting of the Middlesex Planning Commission

Wednesday, July 15, 2020
6:00 PM

Due to restrictions on public gatherings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, these hearings were held remotely via the town's Zoom account and telephone.

Planning Commission Members Present

Sandy Levine
Elias Gardner
Theo Kennedy
Mitch Osiecki
Dick Alderman

Guest:

Clare Rock – CVRPC

CTO at 6:02

Clare Rock of the CVRPC welcomed to the meeting.

Old Business

PC is planning to undertake revision of town zoning regulations over the next year or so. Discussion the prioritization of the items we hope to tackle.

Theo: Top priority includes those items that support development of the village. Secondary importance: Protection of resources (ridgelines, buffers, etc.). Less important: other.

In addition, would also very much like to undertake a quick review of the existing regulations and clean up any language that looks vague or contradictory. Sort of an administrative review.

Question from Elias: "support development of village" to include addressing district areas such as Village/Mixed Use/Industrial zones adjacent to current village area?

Response: yes.

Elias: As Theo mentioned, there are plenty of items that appear clerical in nature (“clarify” this item or that). Sound worthwhile, but let’s be careful to avoid getting lost in the weeds.

Would like to revisit PUD/PRD development and lot density standards. Are these items working as intended?

Would like to clarify what the PC has the authority to regulate.

Theo responds: to the extent that editing/clarifying language represents low hanging fruit, yes let’s do it.

Mitch: Would like to revisit the concept of transitioning from a ZBA model to a DRB. Would like to see the PC be able to spend more time on support for planning/development where possible.

Would like to explore how the PC might be able to support targeted growth in priority development areas.

Agrees that taking a closer look at Village/Mixed Use/Industrial zones is worthwhile.

Dick: No specific priority items at this time.

Sandy: agrees that looking at Village and nearby Mixed Use zones is useful.

Sees value in reviewing ZBA vs. DRB structure. Currently, there’s a bit of redundancy in the current regulations (PC site plan review covers identical items as the ZBA conditional use review).

Would prefer to defer an extensive redrawing of zoning districts. Past experience suggests we should anticipate significant pushback if we try to pursue big changes to districts.

Also likes idea of streamlining/clarifying the permitting process – great if we can make this easier to understand.

Also supports clarifying language where we can do so.

Comment from Theo:

Comments from Clare:

Adopting a DRB model can definitely free up the PC from permitting review in favor of other work that we may view as having higher value.

Reviewing standards for the village district seems to enjoy broad support.

With respect to clarifying/editing language in current regulations, definitely some opportunities to address some areas. As stated by others, some language is easy to clean up, other edits can easily get more involved. Pick your spots.

Mentioned that Hinesburg does a nice job of spelling out exemptions from permitting at beginning of regulations. It might be worthwhile to look at their approach and see if that might be a good model.

Comment from Theo:

Sandy: Some minor reservations about completely ceding oversight to a DRB. The PC has spent considerable time crafting rules and would like to ensure that development is regulated as intended.

Observation was made that possibility exists for someone to serve simultaneously on both the PC and DRB.

There seems to be a consensus that we focus on support for development of the village.

Broad redrawing of districts seems to be a lower priority for most.

Clare comments: current zoning has two Industrial Districts, one east of the historic village and the other to the west. To focus efforts on the village, we might consider renaming the Industrial District west of the village in order to support more flexible development in that targeted area.

Observation was made that PC seems in broad agreement on areas on which we'd like to focus. No need to vote on or set defined priorities tonight.

Walkable Village Update

Sandy and consultants will meet with SB of Tuesday, 7/21. Other PC members welcome to attend.

(Due to schedule conflict, Dick left call at 7:20).

There does not seem to be a strong desire on the part of the PC to advocate for a Class 1 designation of Route 2 through the village right away.

Would like to see if we can generate more interest in the presentation on July 29. Sandy and consultants are developing a one-page summary of that meeting. Elias and Mitch have developed a preliminary address list of residents of the designated village center and adjacent areas – only a few dozen addresses. Sandy and Elias will collaborate and get a mailing out by next Wednesday.

Other Business

Approval of minutes

With minor edit (change “cosmetic” to “non-substantive changes,” Theo moved to approve minutes of July 8; Elias seconded. Theo, Elias, Mitch, Sandy voted in favor. **Motion carried 4-0-1.**

Elias moved to approve minutes of June 24; Theo seconded. Theo, Elias, Sandy and Mitch voted in favor. **Motion carried 4-0-1.**

Upcoming schedule:

July 29: Public Presentation of Village Design grant project.

Sandy is away in the middle of August. Regular meeting is August 19. Can meet if needed, absent Sandy. Otherwise, will meet in September.

Update on Enhanced Energy Plan: had originally envisioned putting to a vote at November election. It will be on the ballot instead at Town Meeting on March 2.

Adjournment

Motion: Theo moved to adjourn; Elias seconded. **Motion carried 4-0-1.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.