

Draft Minutes

Meeting of the Middlesex Planning Commission

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

6:00 PM

Middlesex Town Clerk's Office

5 Church Street

Middlesex, VT 05602

This meeting was conducted remotely using the town's Zoom account. But with the lifting of the Governor's State of Emergency, the Middlesex Planning Commission also allowed for in-person attendance. Member Phil Comen attended from the Town Clerk's office, which was open in the event any resident wished to attend this meeting in person.

Planning Commission Members Present

Philip Comen

Elias Gardner

Theo Kennedy

Sandy Levine

Mitch Osiecki

Guests:

Dayton Crites, Dubois & King

Michael Levine, resident (joined in-progress)

Jenille Smith,

AA,

Kevin Thompson, Zoning Administrator (joined in-progress)

Call to Order

Chair Sandy Levine called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

Roll Call: All members of the Planning Commission were present.

Sandy introduced members of the Planning Commission and noted that, with the lifting of the Governor's State of Emergency, public meetings are now required to provide for in-person attendance for anyone wishing to do so.

Phil Comen attended from the Town Clerk's Office, which was available as an in-person meeting site. Going forward, the PC will likely attempt some sort of hybrid meeting model that will allow for both remote and in-person attendance.

Old Business:

Middlesex Route 2 Updates

Sandy reached out to village residents along the path of a potential sidewalk route, and also residents along a potential river path to the Walter Kelley Park. After proposing a few potential meeting dates, settled on the following as workable for most of those expressing interest in further discussion:

Wed, July 7 – River Path

Wed, July 14 – Sidewalk Route

Both of these meetings are planned for 6:00 pm at the Middlesex Town Clerk's office. We will most likely allow for a remote meeting option (via Zoom), but in person likely preferable. Dayton will plan to attend both of these in person.

Later on, we should plan to schedule a meeting for any interested village residents to discuss the bigger picture of the scoping study.

Dayton also talked about a meeting that the VTrans scoping study plans refers to as a "Local Concerns" meeting. Dayton suggested that we come up with a more appealing name.

Discussed options for a date in August. Dayton is unavailable the first week on August. Others pointed to likely conflicts in the 2nd and 3rd weeks. Last year, the PC took the month of August off – might do so again this year?

Settled on Wednesday, Sep 1 at 6:00 pm. Again, in-person at Town Clerk's office, with a remote option also available.

Dayton advised that he's working on supporting documentation for the upcoming meetings.

He also noted that, relevant to the discussion of a river path to Walter Kelley Park, there is a long strip of land between the properties of Planetary Matters to near the Park that is owned by VTrans. If not ideal for a "river path," it might at least provide an access route, if it's found to be viable. Sandy commented that she believes much of this parcel to be fairly rocky. Certainly worth exploring, but not certain it will prove adequate for a path.

Theo noted that events are starting to be held with more regularity at Camp Meade. At one such event, he witnessed a troubling combination of fast-moving traffic and impatient pedestrians.

Others noted that Friday nights are "Pizza Night," and draw significant crowds.

This situation underscores the need for both the traffic-calming measures and pedestrian access the PC is advocating for. But if the situation gets out of control, could create resistance from some members of the public.

Dayton asked members to capture photos or video of these conditions should the opportunity present itself. This will be valuable information to be able to document.

Enhance Energy Plan

Theo noted that the Energy Committee has put together an updated adoption timeline.

The Energy Committee has set up a couple of sub-committees, one focusing on the language of the plan and another to emphasize communication. Theo and Dexter Lefavour are spearheading the drafting of the plan; Emily Boedecker is leading the communications effort.

Theo added that the EC is planning to hold an Energy Fair in the fall, most likely at Rumney School.

Adoption of the EEP is planned for Town Meeting 2022. Next Steps:
Will look to the community for some initial feedback. We will likely try to schedule some public meetings in June and July.

Zoning Updates

Clare had a schedule conflict and was not able to attend this meeting.

There are a couple of decision points we have yet to resolve:

We currently have two Industrial Districts, with slightly different uses and standards.

We should decide if wish to move forward with two Industrial Districts, each with distinct uses and standards; the option would be adopt the same standards for both, resulting in one Industrial District.

Consensus of the PC was that it would be simpler to have one set of standards, i.e., a single Industrial District.

Clare had flagged as possible mapping errors the designation of the land immediately surrounding the Wrightsville Reservoir as Rural Residential, along with an area in Putnamville where an area coded as Rural Residential splits two areas designated as Village. In both cases, the areas coded as Rural Residential closely align with the Flood Hazard Area, leading Clare to suspect a mapping error.

Mitch and Sandy have both located previous zoning maps circa 2006 that identify the districts in question as Rural Residential. The rationale for the designation is not obvious, but in both cases, the designations as Rural Residential appear to have been intentional. We may revisit when we review the town's residential districts.

Sandy noted that Clare's current work for us through a CVRPC contract runs through June 30. We will engage Clare's services under a new contract that will begin July 1.

Theo briefly discussed an online roundtable discussion he participated in, hosted by the CVRPC and focused on cannabis regulation. The focus of the talk skewed more toward issues of safety, and less on the economic impacts of the sale of cannabis products.

Ultimately, the Cannabis Control Board will be responsible for regulation of cannabis sales in Vermont. *(This sentence is a clarification of my notes, which may have been a misstatement, or something I jotted down incorrectly).*

Better Places Grant

The contract with the state has been completed. The primary goal of this grant is the establishment of two overlooks along the Winooski on property of Planetary Matters (Camp Meade).

Currently working on language for easements across property.

Planetary Matters will be applying for a zoning permit for the construction of these overlooks.

Eventually, there are plans to build a short recreation path on the Camp Meade campus to provide access to these overlooks.

Jenille Smith and Elizabeth Kohler, both representing Cingular/AT&T, joined the meeting to discuss a notice of intent letter provided to the Town outlining plans to upgrade a cell tower on Feral Mountain Road.

The aim of the project is to expand an existing cell tower of some 112 feet by an additional 12 feet (tower will be about 132 feet, including a lightning rod).

The tower is owned by SBA, and is currently leased by Verizon. AT&T plans to lease usage of the tower upon completion of the project.

Phil asked if the project will result in additional infrastructure and also about the timeline for the project.

Response was that they don't anticipate the need to develop Feral Mountain Road. The project will likely be undertaken as soon as practical, after approval is granted by the Public Utility Commission. Possibly beginning this fall, more likely in 2022.

Jenille commented that they aren't required to ask for the town's support of this project, but they wish to be open and inclusive. She added that they've also notified abutting landowners of the project.

Supporting documentation provided indicates that the project will provide improved cell coverage for some 200 residents in the area.

PC will take these comments under advisement and see whether there is sentiment to provide a letter of support for the project.

Administrative Matters

- The Assistant ZA opening has been posted. Letters of interest will be accepted until the end of June.
- Quarterly meetings with the Select Board scheduled for 7/6 and 10/5.
- PC Project List has been updated and is stored on our google drive folder. Sandy adds a new tab each time she updates, so click most recent tab to see the current status of the Project List.
- Discussion of logistics of the return to in-person meetings. Even if we continue to meet by Zoom, we are required to provide a physical space from which people may participate in the meeting. Elias share his experience that if a significant number of people meet in-person, those attending remotely often feel left out. It seems clear that there are advantages of continuing to offer the option of remote access. We will try to see if we can make a hybrid model work. Can possibly rotate responsibility of being the in-person host at Town Clerk's office.

Kevin Smith joined the meeting at 7:38.

Update on Permit Applications & Decisions.

Dixie LLC – Bailin: Phil is drafting a decision. Hopes to have a draft ready to share by Friday.

Kevin noted that there are no other matters in the pipeline that will involve the PC.

Correspondence

None

Minutes

Phil moved to approve meeting minutes of May 19; Elias seconded. **Motion passed, 5-0-0.**

Upcoming Meetings:

- July 6: Select Board update
- July 7: Landowner meeting -- river trail
- July 14: Landowner meeting – sidewalks
- July 21: Regular monthly meeting
- August 18: Regular monthly meeting, but might cancel.

Adjournment

Elias moved to adjourn; Mitch seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitch Osiecki
Planning Commission Secretary