

Draft Minutes

Meeting of the Middlesex Planning Commission

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

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

Philip Comen

Elias Gardner

Theo Kennedy

Sandy Levine

Mitch Osiecki

Guests:

Kevin Thompson (Zoning Administrator)

Mike Pelchar (resident)

Clare Rock (CVRPC)

Dayton Crites (DuBois & King)

Christian Meyer (CVRPC)

Call to Order

Chair Sandy Levine called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Members of the Planning Commission and guests introduced themselves.

New Business

The PC held an organizational meeting last week to elect officers and establish a regular meeting schedule. Ratification of those actions was placed on the agenda for tonight's meeting, as the agenda for the organizational meeting was not published in advance of that meeting.

Motion: Theo moved to re-appoint the current slate of officers: Sandy Levine, Chair; Elias Gardner, Vice-Chair; Mitch Osiecki, Secretary. Philip seconded. **Motion passed, 5-0.**

Motion: Theo moved that the regular meeting of the PC continues to be the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm; Mitch seconded. **Motion passed, 5-0.**

Discussion of work plan for the year. The observation was made that more engagement with other groups and communication about our work is beneficial to the PC.

Should consider providing regular updates to the SB, possibly quarterly.

Old Business:

Zoning regulation updates

Clare provided a quick summary of status of last month's discussions.

1. Gas Stations

Gas stations used to be a possible use, but currently are not. Sandy offered a slight correction: the town has previously had a couple of gas stations (presumably grandfathered), but gas station has not previously been either a permitted or conditional use in any districts.

Suggestion that we might include some language to explicitly allow gas stations as a conditional use, but only in the Village District.

Considerations:

Size of canopy? Preference is toward smaller canopy limit (24').

Setbacks (same as district standards, or require larger buffer?) Preference for a larger setback, perhaps 20 feet. (Prescribed setback is for structures, but an island set back 10 feet from property could result in an auto being refilled parked less than 10 feet from property boundary.)

Requirements for landscaping/screening? Preference is for landscaping/screening to provide a buffer of at least 15 feet.

Should language address EV charging stations? Or is this under the control of someone else, like Department of Public Service. Might wish to pass this topic to the Energy Committee and let them research any issues that might warrant further discussion.

2. Emergency Relief Assistance Fund (ERAF)

Middlesex currently enjoys funding at the highest benefit level; however, this interim status could expire at short notice. Town would need to adopt certain procedures to maintain status and funding level. See discussion of this topic in attached memo from Clare Rock.

One possibility would be to join the Community Rating System (CRS), a program administered through FEMA. CRS offers some advantages, but requires a significant amount of documentation and careful record-keeping. Not generally an attractive option for small communities.

3. Floodplain Regulations

Clare followed with a presentation of proposed revisions to Flood Regulations (also summarized in attached memo). Memo includes Vermont model law and compares that to current Middlesex regulations.

We'll have to give more thought to the impact of these possible changes. As previously noted, much of the current Industrial District along Three Mile Bridge Road & Route 2 is severely impacted by the Flood Hazard Overlay District, meaning very little development beyond what's currently established is permissible. As a result, the recently designated Industrial-West district represents most of the available development area for the Industrial District.

Sandy will try to identify several owners of property in the Industrial District in advance of next month's meeting. We may try to do some informal outreach to these landowners and solicit some initial feedback.

VTrans Scoping Study

Dayton Crites of DuBois & King led a quick discussion of this project. Introduced Christian Meyer, a Transportation Planner with CVRPC, who will serve as Project Administrator for Middlesex.

Christian clarified some prior discussions we've had regarding our ability to contract with DuBois & King as a consulting partner. Explained that D&K is one of a half dozen companies identified as potential consulting partners. The PC will have to form a Selection Committee and go through a brief selection process to formally identify our consulting partner. Christian can work with our Selection Committee to navigate the selection process.

Christian mentioned that Andy Deforge at VTrans is the project contact for this scoping study. Dayton commented that he has other contacts at VTrans who may be able to offer additional input; will share those names with Christian.

Mitch and Philip volunteered to serve on the Selection Committee. Will coordinate this work with Christian.

Philip asked for background information on this scoping study. Will provide.

Dayton explained that the purpose of a scoping study is to put firmer numbers on the various phases of a project under consideration.

Theo asked for more detail about the deliverables we can anticipate from a scoping study.

Dayton explained that because VTrans is performing the scoping study, it adheres to a particular format dictated by VTrans. If we were funding a scoping study through other channels, we would have some

latitude to tailor some of the elements of the study. Dayton offered that if we identify certain items we'd like to see considered, he can take a suggested modification to VTrans for their consideration.

Finally, Dayton clarified that the result of a scoping study is not a project "ready to build," but rather a project "ready to be funded." We won't necessarily be ready to immediately start work on the project at the conclusion of the scoping study, but a thorough scoping study will be very helpful as we pursue a grant to fund the construction phase of the project.

Sandy shared that Congressman Welch just announced that, as part of the recently enacted stimulus package, there may be some potential funding soon available for various projects. Cautioned that it's not certain whether this project is far enough advanced to be considered, but it bears looking into. Selection for projects open until March 31. This might be a longshot, but let's explore.

Other ongoing projects

Enhanced Energy Plan

- Follow up with Select Board about public hearing schedule;
- Energy Committee has suggested edits to draft plan. We need to figure out the proper order for reviewing and incorporating edits into final plan;
- Review and possible approval of street lighting amendment.

Theo will research proper procedure.

See attached proposal document and offer comments ASAP. Theo will also follow up regarding warning and needed public hearings prior to a November vote.

Better Places Grant

- Grant has been awarded;
- Finalize paperwork and contract with State so project manager can begin work. (A ribbon-cutting event is apparently in the works for May.)

Planning Commission Project List – see attached.

Update on status of Permit Applications

- Kingsbury/Connor Contracting: site visit and hearing scheduled for Wednesday, 3/24;
- Manosh: hearing concluded; in deliberative session.

Minutes

Elias moved to approve meeting minutes of December 16. Theo seconded. **Motion passed, 4-0-1.** (Philip abstained)

Elias moved to approve meeting minutes of February 17. Theo seconded. **Motion passed, 4-0-1.** (Philip abstained)

Upcoming Meetings:

- March 24: Kingsbury/Connor Contracting site visit and hearing;
- April 21: Regular meeting
- May 19: Regular meeting

Adjournment

Motion: Theo moved to adjourn; Mitch seconded. **Motion passed, 5-0.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.