

Draft Minutes

Meeting of the Middlesex Planning Commission

Wednesday, May 19, 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

Clare Rock, CVRPC

Christian Meyer, CVRPC

Dayton Crites, Dubois & King

John Wright, ???

Ande Deforge, VTrans

Mike Pelchar, resident

Lisa Parrish & Peter Brown, residents

Joye Mudgett, resident

Lauri Scharf, Energy Committee & resident

Mike Kline, resident

Susan Clark, resident

Peggy Leon, resident

Alison & Jeremy Cornwall, residents

David Lawrence, resident

Dexter Lefavour, Energy Committee & resident

Emily Boedecker, Energy Committee & resident

Michael Levine, resident

Call to Order

Chair Sandy Levine called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm.

Roll Call: All members of the Planning Commission were present.
Sandy introduced members of the Planning Commission and welcomed guests to the meeting.

New Business:

Dayton Crites of DuBois & King made a brief presentation of the Middlesex Route 2 and Riverwalk Scoping Study.

Dayton explained the purpose of a scoping study and talked about how it fits with the larger master plan.

Dayton asked if there is an individual with the role of webmaster. Elias explained that the Planning Commission is developing the capability of using the What's Next Middlesex website as a repository for all PC materials (agendas, minutes, grant documentation, Project List, etc.). Technically, Lauri Scharf is the webmaster, but Elias has the capability of posting PC documents to the website.

Discussion of elements of Public Engagement, including outreach responsibilities (content, press releases, FPF postings, Social Media, mail, phone calls). In the process of delegating individual tasks.

Where are the community gathering spots where we might post flyers? Town Clerk's Office, Red Hen, Rumney School are the usual spots. Would a kiosk at the bandstand make sense?

Monthly check-in – can do this as part of our regular monthly meeting (quick 5 minute update on tasks).

Next Steps:

Will look to the community for some initial feedback. We will likely try to schedule some public meetings in June and July.

Questions:

Alison & Jeremy Cornwall expressed some concern over a flyer distributed in advance of the kickoff that depicted a potential public trail traversing their property.

Dayton apologized for the confusion. The flyer was meant to depict some hypothetical possibilities for developments that could promote a more walkable village, but was not meant to suggest anything in the way of formal proposals.

Jeremy Cornwall: Is there a possibility that the Town take land by eminent domain to create a trail?

Response: Absolutely not.

Peggy Leon: curious about plans for sidewalks. Would they extend all the way to the Roots Market?

Response: There are no firm plans at this time. Sidewalks are one of many possible development projects highlighted in the Walkable Middlesex Village Plan completed in 2020. The PC is exploring several options. The goal at this point is engage with the community and gauge interest and support for various projects.

Peggy suggested flyers at The Roots Market, too.

Peggy also asked about trail access for the initial trail proposed for development on the Camp Meade campus.

Response: Initially, this trail will be developed almost entirely on Planetary Matters property. Eventually, the hope is that we might be able to consider extending this trail to other nearby points of interest, but there have been no plans developed beyond the initial trail on the Camp Meade campus.

Ande Deforge (VTrans): commented that sidewalk concept, if developed, would largely be constructed within the State Highway Right-of-Way (ROW).

Theo asked community members to reach out to the PC with questions. He also encouraged those in attendance tonight to reach out to other village residents who couldn't join us tonight. Noted the difficulty of engaging with community members during these COVID times.

Peggy asked to clarify whether the potential sidewalk from Camp Meade to Church Street (and Roots Market?) would be built on both sides of Route 2 or just on her side (south / Church Street side?)

Response: Again, no firm plans yet, but if constructed, initial phase would likely be a sidewalk only on the south side of Route 2.

Lisa Parrish asked whether a recreation path along the river toward Welch Park would be strictly a walking path or whether it would also be open to bicycles.

Response: No determination about that has been discussed yet.

Peggy asked to clarify just where Welch Park is.

Response from Sandy and Mitch explaining that it's on Welch Park Drive, opposite (for now) the State Police Barracks on Route 2.

Theo asked about next steps for community outreach and public meetings.

Because of other meetings already scheduled for June, June 23 seems like a likely date. Also, July 7 or July 14.

Dayton commented that small group meetings are often the most effective. Some people feel apprehensive about speaking in a large group setting. We will begin work on scheduling and publicizing these meetings.

Old Business:

Enhanced Energy Plan

The latest draft of the Enhanced Energy Plan is the version that includes Appendix C – Street Lighting.

Phil commented that his reading of the draft plan is more of a framework for a plan than a finely detailed plan.

Theo agreed with that assessment of the current draft.

Theo added that the PC can make additional changes to the draft plan after hearing public comments on the plan.

Discussion of a possible adoption timeline. Sandy commented that we have been targeting a town-wide vote on the Enhanced Energy Plan in November, under the assumption that this could be included with a November ballot. But this is an off-year – there may not be any voting scheduled this fall. If that's the case, it might be preferable to push the adoption of the EEP back to Town Meeting in March 2022.

Lauri Scharf introduced Emily Boedecker, who led a discussion of the goals of the Energy Committee. Emily explained that the Energy Committee sees its role as primarily fostering education, public outreach and communication, rather than one of mandating regulations.

Theo added that the goals and work product of the Energy Committee are expected to evolve over time. He cited the Street Lighting Appendix as an example of the Energy Committee seeing an opportunity to add value.

Sandy thanked the EC for their work and commented that she's been impressed at the enthusiasm of the group. She added that it's been exciting to see so many people stepping up to contribute to the work of this committee.

Phil agreed and added that he sees great value in the Energy Committee as an educational resource rather than as a governance body.

Dexter Lefavour commented that the EC wants to modify some of the language in the draft plan. He feels that Enhanced Energy Plan can provide more value to residents by promoting educational resources on topics related to energy efficiency rather than mandating compliance.

Theo echoed his agreement with that approach.

Theo commented that he would prefer to target Town Meeting as an adoption date rather than this November.

That also seems to be the consensus of EC members as well. The general feeling is working toward a Town Meeting adoption date will allow for a much better final product.

Theo proposed revisiting the adoption timeline with Town Meeting adoption as the goal.

Elias concurred.

Dexter also voiced support for extending the adoption date to Town Meeting.

Mitch agreed.

Motion: Theo moved that PC plans for Town Meeting as adoption date for the Enhanced Energy Plan; Elias seconded.

Discussion: Mitch offered a friendly amendment that Theo rework the adoption timeline with Town Meeting as the adoption date.

Motion passed, 5-0.

Lauri offered to join the PC at regular monthly meeting to provide updates.

Dexter commented that other chapters of the Town Plan include items that could impact the Enhanced Energy Plan. Noted that it will be important to maintain consistency between the various sections of the Town Plan.

Theo agreed that there are section of the plan where language can be improved.

Sandy asked the EC to consider areas where language can be improved; the PC welcomes feedback for the EC.

Zoning Updates

Previous unresolved issues:

- Minimum lots sizes in the Industrial Districts. Sandy would like to keep the areas consistent. Minimum lot size will be 0.5 acres in Industrial Districts.
- Route 2 east of Village to the Route 2/189 overpass is currently Industrial District. We are considering a change to Rural Residential.

Sandy proposed that we defer changes to this district until the next phase of zoning updates, when we review Residential Zoning Districts.

- The area immediately surrounding the Wrightsville Reservoir is coded on the zoning map as though it is Rural Residential; however, that area also exactly matches the Flood Hazard Area surrounding this body of water. Clare believes an error was most likely made when the current zoning map was created and that this area is probably intended to be zoned as Conservation. Only a single landowner would be affected if we determine an error was made previously and correct it. No decision.
- A similar error may have been made in the Putnamville area. The current zoning map shows Putnamville as two Village Districts, bisected with a Rural Residential District. Again, the RR District exactly matches the Flood Hazard overlay, and could well have been an error introduced when the last zoning map was created.

Sandy offered to do a little research to see what we can learn from previous zoning maps.

CVRPC has a contract to work with us on zoning issues through the end of June. We'll have to think about where to devote this resource for the remainder of this fiscal year.

No one has received any additional feedback from landowners in the floodplain.

Starting in July, we will work with Clare to review zoning in the residential districts and then review administrative elements of the regulations.

We also need to review our timeline and determine a timetable for completing our work on the regulations, holding the required public hearings, and putting changes up for a town-wide vote.

The Select Board has indicated that they'd like to target Town Meeting 2022 for the vote. That's could prove to be an ambitious timetable.

With the Energy Committee already strongly considering Town Meeting 2022 as the adoption date for the Enhance Energy Plan, it might be preferable to defer the Zoning Regulations to a later date.

Other ongoing projects

Better Places Grant

The folks from Planetary Matters have scheduled a site visit for Tuesday, June 1 at 3:00 pm (rain date: Wednesday, June 1 at 3:00 pm).

Expect to include representatives from Green Mountain Power, Friends of the Winooski, and VYCC.

Other Administrative Business

- Assistant ZA: the Select Board agrees to pursue. Sandy will work on language for a job announcement.
- Quarterly update with the Select Board was well received. We'll plan to continue the updates. Future dates TBA.
- Elias is working on getting a virtual file cabinet for PC documents established on WNM website. It's progressing well. Mitch will work with Elias to ensure Final Minutes of PC Meetings are posted to that site.
- Sandy reminded members that we now have an official (automatically archived) email address for official PC business. Any members wanting to ensure that an email is archived is reminded to include the address: planningcommission@middlesexvermont.org.
- Our PC Project List has been updated and a current draft is stored on our google drive folder.
- Permit Applications/Hearings/Decisions
 - ~ Notice has been received that Manosh decision will be appealed.
 - ~ Carl Bailin Hearing on June 9. This will be a joint hearing with the ZBA.
 - ~ Elias has also created a folder for permits we review.
- There is a tour of the Volunteer Fire Station this week: Thursday, 5/20 from 6:00 – 7:30 pm.

Correspondence

Doug Lombard and Susan Rikstad have both shared emails expressing concerns about some of the proposed concepts related to the Route 2 and Riverwalk Scoping Study, particularly those contemplating expanded use of Church Street as a public gathering space.

Michael Levine asked about next steps with respect to the appeal of the Manosh Decision.

Response: The Town has engaged Rob Halpert to represent Middlesex on the appeal. The PC is allowed to modify its decision within a certain window, but we have no plans to do so.

Minutes

Theo moved to approve meeting minutes of April 21; Phil seconded. **Motion passed, 5-0-0.**

Upcoming Meetings:

- June 9: Bailin Hearing (joint hearing with ZBA).
- June 16: Regular monthly meeting
- July 21: Regular monthly meeting
- Anticipate one or two public meetings related to Route 2 and Riverwalk Scoping Study. Dates are yet to be determined.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitch Osiecki
Planning Commission Secretary