



RUTLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

City Hall – 52 Washington St. – Rutland, VT 05701
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Minutes **April 26, 2017**

Present: Susan Schreibman (SS), Alvin Figiel (AF), Dave Coppock (DC), Pat Griffin (PG) and Larry Walter (LW).

City staff present: Mayor Allaire, Tara Kelly (TK) and Bob Tanner (BT)

SS, Chair, called the meet to order at 5:30 pm

- I. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS – None.**
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT – None.**
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 12, 2017.**
PG moved and DC seconded to approve the minutes. Accepted as presented.
- IV. NEW BUSINESS**

The Planning Commission welcomed Mayor Allaire and thanked him for the opportunity to have an informal discussion about the work of the Planning Commission and its role in the new administration. Mayor Allaire began by describing his first month in office. It has been a smooth transition with the strong team of department heads remaining in place. He has been actively meeting with a number of people and organizations. His priority is on the economy and new jobs. As he moves past transition and into the coming months he will be forming a vision and set of policy goals with a 5-10 year horizon. Financial constraints are challenging in the city. One priority will be implementing a Capital Improvement Plan. There is a full formed CIP that was done a couple of years ago that needs to be put into place.

SS asked how the Planning Commission can help with this work of planning for the future. Mayor Allaire noted that the current Planning Commission seems more proactive and willing to get involved than in recent history. He asked what the Commission sees as its role.

SS described the current work and overarching scope of priorities for the Commission as:

- Sign Ordinance update
- Zoning bylaws update
- Looking at ways to increase the livability and safety of the community through land use decisions
- Improving conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians in the city
- Participation in Act 250 decisions

AF noted that he has been on the Commission for a number of years. He said the current members have a lot of energy. And, having staff support to the Commission has made a big difference.

AF then described the Commission's goal for revamping the Sign Ordinance is to have a positive, long-term impact on the visual aesthetics and traffic safety – especially along the main travel corridors. He noted that helping Rutland city to be more “Vermont like” in that way would increase the likelihood that more tourist dollars will be attracted to and spent here. AF then noted that the Zoning Bylaws update is necessary in order to create full compliance with State statute as well as to create a clearer, more predictable development process.

Mayor Allaire noted that he is pleased that there are major improvements about to come to fruition with the Strongs Avenue Gateway project to complement previous work along the West Street gateway. And, the Killington Valley Initiative holds promise for tying Rutland closer to that market. He sees the change of Mayor as a change to relook at things. A fresh opportunity to get some things done. He would like to be brought up to speed on the Sign Ordinance work so he has a full understanding as it gets rolled out for public review.

BT noted that the Sign Ordinance represents over a year of work and is a major upgrade from the current ordinance. DC noted that with regards to the Sign Ordinance the overall size of signs allowed will be less than the current ordinance. This is an intentional decision given that the research shows big and more signs isn't necessarily better for business. It creates a situation of competitive clutter. In reality, smaller signs in a similar line of sight are more readable and ultimately better for both drivers and the businesses.

A short discussion about the Complete Streets Guidance document took place. SS emphasized that ensuring a human element is considered in the design of streets, not just automobile, is ultimately better for the community fabric and more supportive of local economic development.

SS then asked the Mayor about Woodstock Avenue. She noted that she reviewed recent accident data and found that there continue to be issues with the road which may have been resolved by the road diet concept. Mayor Allaire stated his opinion of the past decision regarding that roadway has not changed. However, he sees plenty of opportunity to find common ground on other issues such as improving pedestrian ability to cross major arterials such as South Main Street and Woodstock Avenue. SS complimented the Strongs Avenue project as a good example of positive progress in that regard.

PG asked the Mayor what process should be used to bring the Sign Ordinance forward to him and the Board of Aldermen. Mayor suggested he'd like to have a meeting to review and discuss and then the Commission should ask the Board of Aldermen to refer to committee so that a presentation and discussion could be held.

LW mentioned he'd like to see 25 MPH zones in residential neighborhoods. This is an issue that had previously been reviewed by the traffic safety committee and seems to have support. There was some discussion about the critical role enforcement plays in speed control as well.

PG asked how the Planning Commission can create a stronger connection with the RRA board. Dave suggested a Planning Commission member could attend RRA meetings. And, maybe there could be a joint meeting at some point to define relationships and roles. PG emphasized he doesn't see a problem, he just wanted to be sure everyone is pulling in the same direction. The Mayor expressed support for that goal.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Zoning Update

SS and TK reviewed their recent meeting with Juli Beth Hinds of Orion Planning and Design to set the stage for working together. Members expressed support for the scope of work and are eager to get the process rolling. The May 10th meeting will be focused on setting goals and establishing good communication among all committee members. The members were reminded to provide any feedback about availability within the month of July for the "planning week". Larry noted he is out of town the week of July 17th.

Sign Ordinance

The Commission reviewed a powerpoint presentation that PG created to be used in the sessions with the Mayor/Board of Aldermen/public. There was discussion and review of each slide. The following actions are needed to follow up on suggestions:

- LW will work on getting photos of large signs, electronic message boards, and roof top signs.
- TK will provide an 11x17 base map to Alvin to create a new version of the districts map.
- TK will help identify a prototype site for the slide that calculates signage allowances.
- BT will provide dimensions and heights of the following: Dollar General and Dunkin Donuts
- TK will increase the text on the districts chart to be more readable.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

The following communications were received and placed on file:

- Notice of Issuance of Wetland General Permit project #2016-356
- Letter from CBRE regarding a 73-foot monopole
- Notice re: Certificate of Public Good re: transmission upgrade

The Commission reviewed a memo from Jeff Wennberg, Commissioner of Public Works regarding the draft Complete Streets Guidance Document and next steps. The Commission asked TK to request copies of the new draft document so that Commission members could

review in preparation for their May 24, 2017 meeting. They plan to review and discuss the new draft document and maps, alongside the comments they previously submitted, at their May 24, 2017 meeting and then figure out next steps.

There followed a discussion about the Planning Commission's desire to be proactive in providing input into the City's road projects and how Complete Streets is being implemented using the new guidance. They would like to understand how analyses are conducted and seek additional ways of supporting long-term goals for improving multi-modal use of the roadways including the possibility of a Capital Improvement Plan for creating complete streets on high priority roadways.

VII. **ADJOURN** - Meeting was adjourned at 7:32 PM (moved AF, seconded PG)