

November 5, 2015

PC Members Present: Jean Vissering (Chair), Norman Hill, Jack Pauly, Kim Watson, Scott Hess, Jay Stewart, Mark Lane

Others Present: Bruce Johnson (Town Administrator), Kristi Flynn (Recording Secretary), Austin Cleaves

Call to order: 7:02pm

Changes to Agenda – discuss solar array project

Public Comment – None

Historical Perspective of East Montpelier Zoning History with Austin Cleaves

Mr. Cleaves was on the PC in the 1970's. Following are some comments he had:

- Agreed with most of what was said by the other former members at the previous meeting
- 7-acre zone didn't achieve what they hoped it would
- Districts were based on septic capability at that time
- Town has done a good job conserving land/keeping it open for farming
- Tax program that was before current use was not used by many other towns at the time – incentives for keeping land open and undeveloped
- 7 acre minimum is excessive in Zone E
- At the time, the PC saw no reason to change the zoning in the village because the lots were already small
- Big farm equipment on the roads – Mr. Cleaves wishes other drivers would slow down

Evaluation of Current Zoning in Relation to Existing Land Use and Resources

In trying to look at what is left in the town after conserved land, the PC reviewed several CVRPC maps.

- Map 1.2 shows agriculture/open land, prime agricultural soils and active farmland/current use.
 - Lylehaven is under conservation development – keep the best agricultural lands open and develop the rest
 - General observation – large amounts of conserved/agricultural land in Rural Residential and Industrial zones
- Map 2.2 shows wildlife habitats, connecting blocks and connecting lands
 - The goal is to have contiguous lands for wildlife
- Map 3 is the CVRPC Future Land Use Map
 - Resource – requires special protection, not easily developed
 - Rural – could be developed, portions are already conserved/farmed
- Map 4 shows population density
 - Rural probably matches up with conserved land
- Map 5 shows soil suitability for septic
 - Best soils appear to be in the Industrial zone

Observations/Questions:

- Are the zones appropriate?
- Should they be changed?
- Are setbacks set appropriately in each zone?
- 7-acre minimum not helping to create conserved land in Zone E

Chair mentioned inviting Kate McCarthy, a planner with VNRC, to come to a PC meeting. She could help with getting to the goals and getting the PC to focus on what's possible. The problems identified by the PC: 1) identify new growth areas (i.e., Gallison Hill, all areas in the Town Plan have limitations), and 2) is it possible to get away from zoning by acreage limits. The Chair will check with Ms. McCarthy to see if she can attend the next meeting.

The PC would like to see a map that shows everything by lot that is developable in town, which would exclude conserved land and land in current use. It may be similar to the Future Land Use map. There was suggestion to look at the area north of Murray Hill on County Road as a future growth area because of the proximity to water/sewer hook-up with Montpelier.

Solar Array Project Proposal in the Village

The PC received the packet from the solar developer, providing 45-day notice of filing with the PSB. Mr. Hill noted some takeaways from the VLCT Forum:

- PSB is like our DRB – makes decisions
- PS Department is a public service – makes the policies followed by the PSB
- International hedge funds and investors are investing in solar and wind farms across Vermont
- The EM Town Plan has to be more specific in what the town wants to protect

The PC may be for the project, but needs more information. The PC/SB can still comment at the hearing. The 500kw project on the Cassini property is 5 times larger than the array on the McKnight Farm. The Cassini property happens to be prime septic and developable land in the village. The PC needs more research, but should be an active participant in the proceedings:

- Who is the owner
- Site visit
- Screening
- Abutting landowners' opinions
- Suggest joint meeting with PC, SB and developers

PC should draft a letter with comments and concerns; ask the developer to avoid the 6th lot that might be used for a central septic system.

Resignation of PC Member Gene Troia; Possibilities for Interim PC Member

There could be an interim appointment to the PC by the SB. Let the Chair know of any suggestions. A suggestion was made to post a notice on Front Porch Forum.

Review Minutes

October 15, 2015

Motion: I move to approve the minutes as amended. Made: Mr. Hess, second: Ms. Watson

Vote on Motion: Passed 7-0

ZA Report

4 new permits since last meeting

DRB Report

- Denied Deb Glottmann's appeal on the Wells' permit with the condition that the accessory dwelling couldn't be more than 600 square feet
- Zoning regulations need to define floor area more clearly, specifically how to measure
- Approved Manghi subdivision
- 11/30 SB public hearing on zoning regulation amendments

Motion to Adjourn. Made: Ms. Watson, second: Mr. Hill. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kristi Flynn, Recording Clerk