Minutes of the East Montpelier Planning Commission

DRAFT COPY

May 20, 2021

PC Members Present: Zach Sullivan (Chair), Julie Potter, Clarice Cutler, Kim Watson (7:40p), Scott Hess, Richard Hall, Sui Tip Lam, Gianna Petito

Others Present: Kristi Flynn (Recording Secretary, 7:15p), Clare Rock (CVRPC), Laureen Gauthier, Ron Koss, Kate Ruddle

Call to Order: 7:04pm
Roll Call Attendance
The Chair took roll call attendance; the PC members noted above were present.
Statement Regarding Remote Public Meeting
The Chair noted that as a public body, the PC must still follow open meeting laws. Vermont is allowing remote meeting. The Chair read the recommended statement from VLCT regarding meeting remotely.
Changes to Agenda: None
Public Comment: None

Check in with Clare Rock – Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
Ms. Rock asked to meet with the PC just to check in for the regular periodic consultation. She reviewed the services that are offered by the RPC. She would love to know about any projects coming up or training that the PC is interested in. Ms. Rock is a Senior Planner for the RPC; her primary focus is land use issues. The last consultation was in 2017 and was a formal review and approval of the current Town Plan. This approval provides some additional opportunities for funding sources. Ms. Rock noted that comments were provided on the Town Plan that might be useful for the next update; she is happy to provide those comments, if needed.

Ms. Rock reviewed the services offered by the CVRPC:
- Assist with local efforts, including planning projects and programs
- Municipal planning studies
- RPC will update the regional plan, similar to the town plans on a regional scale
- Assist with local planning projects and documents
- Transportation study assistance
- Emergency preparedness help, such as hazard mitigation plans
- Clean water projects, such as water quality projects
- Stormwater projects
- Working with THRIVE group, a coalition of human services organizations
- Provide data and resources: spatial analysis and mapping, data collection inventory, such as local infrastructure
- Education and training opportunities, often in the form of roundtable discussions
- Grant writing and management
- Project management services

Ms. Potter noted that she has gotten important information from Ms. Rock from time-to-time on issues relevant to East Montpelier. The CVRPC is often in a data depository role, providing census/demographic information and all the data for the Town Plan charts and maps. For the Town Plan and the current zoning regulation changes, the PC should let the RPC pre-review the changes before a public hearing; Ms. Rock is happy to review at an informal level. The RPC is working on the regional Energy Plan and can help the town with theirs. Ms. Rock noted that the Village Center Designation must be renewed this fall and the RPC can help with the application. The RPC is working on a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that will replace the statewide strategy. There will be a group convening on June 9 in Montpelier regarding regional trail systems, as well as talking about bringing recreation and economy together. The goal is to identify the gaps and opportunities in the network.

The PC asked Ms. Rock if she had any suggestions regarding cell towers and language that could be added to the zoning regulations. Regarding this and Act 248, Ms. Rock noted this is an area the RPC needs to look into and they don't have a lot of training opportunities currently. She will take this request back to the office.

Discuss Village Zoning: Planned Unit Developments
The PC reviewed the changes to Section 5.6.
Section 5.6
(A) Purpose – added 'any of the following'
(B) Applicability – ZA has some concerns
(E) General standards –
(2) moved from a different place - ZA doesn't like it
(5) ZA noted it is superfluous; Ms. Potter will look into it

The PC discussed that a PUD can be residential, commercial, industrial or mixed use, though it has to relate to the underlying district and must have enough acreage for district minimums. PUDs could provide additional density in the village. The PC discussed that variances are not applicable to PUDs.

(4) does this apply to any PUD? Multifamily is conditional in all districts except Industrial; remove 'residential' in the first sentence

(10) – (12) – regarding sewer and water in development envelope; the PC may want it but need to keep flexibility; this was moved from section F to E

(F) Open space – Ms. Petito is interested in protecting natural features that exist currently

(1) – Ms. Petito will draft some language regarding conservation; the challenge is in trying to make language work in village and more rural areas

The main purpose of PUDs is to conserve open space.

Discussion Scenic Resources Updates to Town Plan

The Chair again asked if the PC would like to open up scenic areas to ones that were missed or continue just making technical changes for the things that were inadvertently left out. The consensus of five members was to stick to the technical changes. The PC and residents had the following comments:

- Regarding updating trails, the PC could add trails to the Telecommunications section in the 2026 update
  - The Town Plan takes more than 2 years to update; start looking at it 3 years prior to expiration
- Consider adding an Action in the Town Plan to update Scenic Resources; possibly work with Conservation Commission
- Mr. Koss asked if any commissioners affected by cell towers; most residents are clueless on how cell towers might affect them
- It comes down to the Public Utility Commission deciding to site a tower or the public good
- Ms. Lam appreciates the concerns of the residents but don't simply focus on looking at scenic resources to block cell towers
- Mr. Hall appreciates the input and wondered how the PC can find out what cell coverage is necessary and find locations that provide good coverage for the town
  - The Chair noted that this should definitely be a topic but could also be a moving target; he suggested asking the CVRPC for assistance

The PC reviewed the Cell Coverage Map, which the PC would like to see Verizon and AT&T separated out to get a better sense of development pressure. Ms. Watson wondered where the coverage is coming from and if Mr. Hall's tower on the silo will help. CVRPC was asked to provide average coverage on the ground, the map deals with reality not where the coverage is coming from. The PC would like to see a map shown by carrier. The PC agreed that they would like to see an embedded map instead of a supplemental one. The PC agreed the data used is from 2019 and may depend on the Department of Public Service for updates.

Updates

- Capital Improvement Committee – no update – meeting in August – Mr. Hess newly appointed
- Energy Committee – no update
- Resilient Roads Committee – no update
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission – a workshop on trails/recreation economy is planned for collaboration on a regional scale; Ms. Potter shared the invite with EM Trails, Inc., who is very interested; Ms. Potter's resignation is effective 5/31; Ms. Cutler will attend until a permanent representative is appointed
  - The PC thanked Ms. Potter for her eight years of service as representative to the CVRPC; the CVRPC was a mess when she started but us much more stable now
- rbTech was asked for a formal response to the PC's concerns; GMP has filed an objection to the project

ZA Report

- Four new permits

DRB Report

- Meeting on 6/1/21:
  - Hearings on conditional use reviews on Route 2

Review Minutes

May 6, 2021

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

Vote on Motion: Passed 8-0

Other Business

- The Chair noted the SB is awaiting state guidance on re-opening in-person meetings; he hopes that we can meet in-person by the beginning of July
- Mr. Hess would like the SB to allow hybrid meetings going forward so that members can attend remotely; Zoom is probably not an option and the CVRPC has looked at other options

Motion to Adjourn. Made: Ms. Watson, second: Ms. Petito. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:07p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kristi Flynn, Recording Secretary