

Minutes of the East Montpelier Planning Commission

Approved 11/3/22

October 20, 2022

PC Members Present: Zach Sullivan (Chair), Clarice Cutler, Kim Watson, Gianna Petito (via zoom), Richard Hall, Spencer Hardy

Others Present: Deirdre Connelly

Call to Order: 7:04 pm

Changes to Agenda: Mr. Sullivan suggested pushing the discussion of the flood reg updates to the end of the meeting.

Public Comment: None.

Review Minutes

The group reviewed the October 6, 2022 minutes and made an edit for clarity.

Motion: To approve the October 6, 2022 minutes with tonight's edit. Made by Ms. Petito, second by Ms. Watson. Passed unanimously.

PC Membership Updates

Mr. Hardy notified the group that he is moving to Plainfield on November 15, so he will only be on the Planning Commission for one more meeting. Mr. Sullivan will inform Town Administrator Jenkins and check to see if anything formal needs to go before the Selectboard.

Discussion of Energy Plan

Mr. Sullivan suggested using the provided worksheets to go through the Energy Plan drafts and figure out what could be assigned to an Energy Committee and where the PC might want to ask for input from the Energy Committee. The group began by looking at the pathways and started with 6a. Mr. Sullivan pointed out that it doesn't currently meet the standard. Ms. Cutler suggested this was an example where the PC could assign the Energy Committee to hold workshops and distribute information to individuals and businesses to meet the standard. Mr. Hardy suggested that zoning changes could encourage smaller footprints and Ms. Watson pointed out that some parts of the zoning regs speak to efficiency. Mr. Sullivan noted that the most recent zoning update made it easier to build multifamily dwellings and more units, and maybe that could be something to include in 6a. Ms. Petito suggested that the zoning updates might fit better with 6b since 6a seems to specifically address behaviors like turning off lights or installing low flow toilets, whereas other parts of 6 address structural improvements.

Mr. Sullivan noted that there is a role for the town in helping people understand how to access rebates and make choices toward efficiency, and that government regulations can be difficult to parse. Ms. Watson said that the main goal seems to be to establish an energy committee to do the work of educating people and promoting efficiencies. Mr. Sullivan noted that some areas are complicated enough that individuals may need help in accessing and understanding efficiencies. There is an equity piece to this as well, in that people have different levels of awareness and access to rebates. Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Watson agreed that the Energy Committee should take on this educator role for the town.

Mr. Hall wondered if the answer to all of the yes/no questions in the pathways is that the PC will form an energy committee to promote these ideas. Mr. Sullivan asked if the PC should try to recruit the Energy Committee before finalizing the answers in this section, so they have the opportunity to provide input. Ms. Cutler suggested that part of the Energy Committee's work might be performing research and thinking through what is feasible for East Montpelier residents and businesses. Mr. Hardy asked if the PC should try to work with CVRPC to help write this plan, perhaps even hire them to work on portions. Mr. Sullivan noted that there has been a lot of change at CVRPC since the last Energy Committee worked with them in that capacity, and that CVRPC may not have the time to do that work.

Mr. Sullivan suggested tabling the discussion of the Energy Plan and pathways and moving to a discussion on public engagement and recruiting an Energy Committee.

Discussion of Energy Plan Public Engagement

Mr. Sullivan noted that the PC has gone back and forth on whether they need more substance to the Energy Plan before recruiting Energy Committee members, or whether they should recruit members and ask for their input on the plan. He suggested the PC make a decision here and come up with some clear next steps on the Energy Committee and public engagement.

Ms. Watson asked if the Energy Plan would be finalized as an appendix to the town plan or incorporated into the town plan. Mr. Sullivan said that the intention was to incorporate it into the town plan and only have appendices for pieces like graphics and large chunks of data.

Motion: That the Planning Commission integrate the energy plan into the town plan. Made by Ms. Cutler, second by Mr. Hardy. Passed unanimously.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the PC should finalize the Energy Plan before recruiting Energy Committee members. Ms. Watson pointed out that the town plan is due to be revised in 2026 and that the process for that typically starts three years before hand. She noted that integrating the Energy Plan into the town plan will be a lot of work in addition to the overall town plan revisions.

Ms. Cutler suggested the PC create some light language or talking points to use to recruit Energy Committee members. Ms. Petito pointed out that the group has the draft presentation and draft mission statement. Mr. Sullivan stated that he would like to come out of the next PC meeting with a job description of sorts for the Planning Commission. Ms. Cutler offered to draft some points for the next meeting and will touch base with Ms. Petito and look at the draft presentation to get some ideas.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the group should focus on public outreach or one-on-one recruitment for the Energy Committee. The group discussed this question and agreed both approaches had merit. A large public forum didn't seem feasible, but Mr. Sullivan suggested inviting specific people to an upcoming PC meeting to discuss the Energy Plan and the work that the Energy Committee would be tasked with. Mr. Sullivan will work with Ms. Petito on a recruitment plan and will invite members from the previous Energy Committee who are still interested in being involved to attend the November 3 PC meeting.

Update re: potential for updates to flood regs

Mr. Sullivan noted that the meeting was running long and suggested the group table this discussion until the next meeting. He let the group know that he looked into the laws around updating the regs for typos and only found information on making amendments through hearings. Ms. Watson said the PC had corrected typos in the past. Ms. Petito suggested looking at the definition of "amendment" to see if typos fit under that category. Ms. Watson will speak to Mr. Cueto about the requested changes.

Updates

- **Capital Improvement Committee-** no update, the next meeting is scheduled for November
- **Energy Committee-** no update
- **Resilient Roads Committee-** no update
- **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission-** CVRPC has a new acting director; the most recent meeting included a budget presentation about 2023 budgeting priorities and the West Vermont strategic development strategy to allow more time for public comment

ZA Report

The PC reviewed the report, there were no comments.

DRB Report

The next meeting is scheduled for November.

Other Business

Mr. Sullivan noted that Worcester is working on a town plan, he received the notice and will forward to everyone in case anyone is interested in attending.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Ms. Cutler, second by Mr. Hall. Passed unanimously.

Meeting closed at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.