

Minutes of the East Montpelier Planning Commission

Approved 1/19/23

January 5, 2023

PC Members Present: Zach Sullivan (Chair), Clarice Cutler, Scott Hess (via zoom), Maia Stone (via zoom), Gianna Petito (via zoom), Mark Lane

Others Present: Deirdre Connelly

Call to Order: 7:06 pm

Changes to Agenda: None.

Public Comment: None.

Review Minutes

The group reviewed the December 15, 2022 minutes. Mr. Hess offered his thanks for the good minutes.

Motion: To approve the December 15, 2022 minutes as presented. Made by Mr. Hess, second by Ms. Cutler. Passed unanimously.

Discuss Work Plan for Housing Need Analysis

Mr. Sullivan noted he had attended a Selectboard meeting in December and discussed wastewater issues with the Board. Mr. Etnier had offered to provide the PC with background information on past wastewater studies. Mr. Hess noted that when the town had last considered connecting with Montpelier's sewer system the cost was multi-millions of dollars, and Mr. Lane clarified that the most recent figure was around \$15 million and most of the cost was for laying pipe. Mr. Lane added that he knew Montpelier was beginning an upgrade to their sewer system and wondered if it could be an opportunity for East Montpelier to connect with their system. Ms. Petito added that she knew grant dollars are available to municipalities specifically for wastewater projects. Ms. Cutler pointed out that in talking about housing, the town can't encourage density without the infrastructure to support it. Mr. Hess offered to reach out to Mr. Etnier for the background information and past wastewater studies.

Mr. Sullivan raised the topic of short-term rentals. Mr. Hess asked if there was a way to know what the market is for short-term rentals in East Montpelier and Mr. Sullivan suggested the group could start by looking at available listings on Airbnb and Vrbo. Ms. Petito pointed out that the topic of short-term rentals can be very complex and there are often multiple reasons for the unavailability of houses and rental units. She offered an example of a homeowner renting out an ADU through Airbnb that allows them to afford their home as just one possible example of the complexities around short-term rentals. Ms. Stone did a quick search on Airbnb and saw just five available rentals that all appeared to be guest suites. Mr. Hess suggested that this seemed to imply short-term rentals aren't a large issue for East Montpelier. Mr. Sullivan agreed and suggested it might be a data point the group checks on periodically, but that it probably doesn't need more research at this time. Ms. Petito noted that if a long-term rental registry is established for Vermont, it could be a useful source for data in the future.

Mr. Sullivan raised the topic of senior housing and gave a little background on past projects. He noted that the cost of construction was the main reason no new multi-unit senior housing had been constructed. He wondered if the group would be interested in looking into zoning to see if there are places where it

could be viable to construct housing for a large number of people, and whether the current zoning restricts those options. Ms. Cutler offered to take a look and Mr. Sullivan offered to help.

Mr. Sullivan noted that he is also looking into data on building activity, sales, and rentals in East Montpelier.

Discuss Assessment of Process on Town Plan Goals Specific to Selectboard

During Mr. Sullivan's visit to the Selectboard in December, the Board requested a list of the action items assigned to the Selectboard in the current town plan for them to review in March after Town Meeting. Mr. Sullivan explained that this idea came from a larger idea of evaluating progress on all of the action items in the town plan. Mr. Sullivan asked the group for their input on how best to approach this task. The group discussed the complexity of evaluating the work of other committees and noted that the PC may not know whether a task is in progress or completed. Ms. Petito suggested sending out a list of the tasks to each committee for them to indicate what is complete or still in progress. She suggested framing this as a collaborative process and a way to help committees set priorities.

Ms. Cutler asked if this project would be just for the Selectboard or for all committees. Mr. Sullivan suggested starting with the Selectboard because they had asked for the PC's help in compiling their list, and perhaps expanding to other committees at a later date. Ms. Stone offered to compile the action items assigned to the Selectboard in an Excel document.

Discuss Energy Committee Selection Process

Mr. Sullivan reported that eight people have expressed interest in participating in the Energy Committee. He asked if the group thought it would be helpful to ask these eight people for statements of interest or even to invite them to attend a future PC meeting for an informal interview. Ms. Petito voiced support for asking for statements of interest and added that a summary of their background would be helpful too. She suggested putting out a final public call for statements of interest to see if we get any more people. Mr. Sullivan will work on a post for Front Porch Forum and reach out to the eight people who have expressed interest to ask for statements of interest and a summary of their backgrounds.

Updates

- **Capital Improvement Committee-** No update.
- **Energy Committee-** No update.
- **Resilient Roads Committee-** Mr. Lane no update.
- **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission-** No update.

ZA Report

Town Administrator Jenkins emailed Mr. Sullivan to say that no new permits have been issued.

DRB Report

Ms. Cutler reported that ZA Brown thinks there may be a hearing in February on a subdivision.

Other Business

Mr. Sullivan noted that Ms. Oates is stepping down from the PC due to personal commitments. Ms. Cutler asked if the PC needed to appoint someone to this new vacancy. Mr. Sullivan suggested that the group leave the seat open until Town Meeting, when someone can be elected to the seat. Ms. Petito asked if the PC will need to appoint someone to the seat if no one runs for the vacancy and Mr. Sullivan

confirmed that was correct. Mr. Hess asked how many seats were open. Mr. Sullivan explained that Ms. Cutler is running for reelection, Ms. Stone is running for the seat she was appointed to, Mr. Hess's seat will be open, and now Ms. Oates's seat will be open.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Lane, second by Ms. Petito. Passed unanimously.

Meeting closed at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.