

Minutes of the East Montpelier Planning Commission

Approved 3/16/23

March 2, 2023

PC Members Present: Zach Sullivan (Chair), Maia Stone (zoom), Scott Hess (zoom), Richard Hall, Clarice Cutler, Kim Watson, Mark Lane

Others Present: Deirdre Connelly (zoom)

Call to Order: 7:06 pm

Changes to Agenda: None.

Public Comment: None.

Review Minutes

The group reviewed the February 16, 2023 minutes.

Motion: To approve the February 16, 2023 minutes as presented. Made by Mr. Hess, second by Ms. Watson. Passed unanimously.

Discuss work done on zoning updates needs for senior housing and group homes

Ms. Cutler explained that she took a look at the zoning for any restrictions on two family, multi-family, residential care, group home, mobile home park, and boarding house housing types in East Montpelier. She noted that regs do not currently describe “senior housing” as a housing type. The group reviewed Ms. Cutler’s table showing the restrictions for each type of housing by zone and she noted that she highlighted areas where the PC may want to consider reducing restrictions.

Ms. Cutler noted that the East Montpelier zoning regs for residential care and group home housing types may be misaligned with state statute. She noted that they are defined together in state statute and the language seems to imply that anywhere a single-family dwelling is permitted, group homes and residential care facilities must also be permitted. Ms. Watson agreed that this was the implied meaning and suggested updating this language might be a good thing to address in the next round of zoning updates.

Mr. Hess pointed out that East Montpelier is unlikely to see large group home or residential care facilities for reasons other than the zoning regulations- water or wastewater restrictions, for example.

Mr. Sullivan returned to the point that the regs don’t address senior housing directly. Ms. Watson suggested that the multi-family housing type encompassed senior housing. Mr. Sullivan noted that water consumption and density for multi-family housing is generally greater than it is for senior housing, and that might be a reason to separate senior housing from multi-family housing.

Mr. Hall asked if the group was looking at senior housing in anticipation of the next round of updates to the Town Plan. Mr. Sullivan said yes, the group is working on a list of items to address in the Town Plan and also for the next round of zoning updates. The group discussed the urgency of these updates around senior housing. Ms. Watson commented that zoning updates can take a year, so the group should pick updates that they feel should be prioritized. Ms. Cutler noted that the DRB isn’t spending a lot of time reviewing conditional multi-family housing permits, but that housing is an issue in the state, and it might be worthwhile for the group to work on this with the intention of increasing the building potential in

town. Mr. Sullivan noted that if the DRB isn't seeing a lot of conditional use review for multi-family housing, the regs may not be a significant barrier for the group to address.

Mr. Sullivan noted that if the PC and the DRB interpreted the regs allowing multi-family dwellings to include senior housing, that would permit the creation of senior housing without requiring changes to the zoning, and that this discussion and the minutes of this meeting could serve as the documentation of how the PC would like to see these regs interpreted.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the group was comfortable with the interpretation that senior housing projects could be permitted as multi-family housing. The present PC members were comfortable with it.

Discuss prior energy planning work to go to Energy Committee

Mr. Sullivan reported that the Energy Committee is scheduling their first meeting and he plans to attend to get them up to speed on open meeting procedures and to give them some history on past energy committee work. He asked the group for input on any information or materials he should pass along to the Energy Committee. Suggestions included the powerpoint with the draft mission statement, minutes from PC meetings that include discussion of the energy plan, and the goals for energy use in East Montpelier. Mr. Sullivan will also connect them with Sam Lash to get the updated data for the energy plan.

Mr. Sullivan asked the group if they thought the PC should ask the Energy Committee to work on anything specific beyond the energy plan. Ms. Watson suggested waiting until they've met a few times. Mr. Hess suggested they work on what the town can really do with its size and resources, and figure out steps that are practical and available.

The group discussed PC attendance at Energy Committee meetings. Mr. Hess suggested PC members take turns, perhaps setup a rotating schedule. Ms. Watson, Mr. Lane, and Ms. Cutler volunteered to sit in on the next few Energy Committee meetings. Mr. Sullivan suggested the PC and Energy Committee meet to brainstorm the work they want to collaborate on.

Updates

- **Capital Improvement Committee-** No update.
- **Energy Committee-** No update.
- **Resilient Roads Committee-** No update.
- **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission-** No update. Mr. Sullivan noted that the group needs to find someone to be this representative.

ZA Report

None.

DRB Report

None.

Other Business

Mr. Sullivan noted that this is Mr. Hess's last meeting and thanked him for all of his time on the PC.

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

Meeting closed at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.