

Minutes of the East Montpelier Planning Commission-Final

December 7, 2023

PC Members Present: Zach Sullivan (Chair), Erica Zimmerman, Kim Watson (zoom), Clarice Cutler, Richard Hall, Mark Lane, Clarice Cutler

PC Members Absent: Gianna Petitio, Maia Stone, Nic Khosla

Call to Order: 7:05 pm, the meeting is being recorded per a request from Ms. Stone.

Changes to Agenda: None.

Public Comment: None.

Review Minutes

The group reviewed the November 16, 2023 minutes.

Motion: To approve the November 16, 2023, minutes as presented. Made by Clarice Cutler, second by Mark Lane. Passed unanimously.

Census Data Training

Census Data Overview

We get census data from two main sources:

The Decennial Census is the comprehensive survey every 10 years intended to collect data on every person living in the United States. It collects a limited amount of information (identities, demographics, family relationships), but is incredibly comprehensive in the number of people it collects information on.

The American Community Survey is an ongoing survey collecting very detailed information about a subset of the population. It is used along with the information from the decennial census to estimate a large number of characteristics about the population, and results are reported as estimates of what is expected in the entire population. Most of the data used in the town plan will come from the American Community Survey. Some ACS data will be at the one year level, but most is shown in either 3 or 5 year estimates. Granularity of data collected.

Census data is organized in the following way:

Blocks are the smallest data units available. These will usually not be used for reporting, but may be useful if extreme granularity is needed (ie for grant funding if we need to show that a particular area meets income thresholds that the town as a whole does not – ie for water or wastewater grants).

Block Groups are the smallest units typically used for reporting. In some cases a town may be a single block group.

Tracts are groups of Block Groups (usually 2 or 3). East Montpelier is a single tract, while Montpelier has multiple tracts. Blocks, Block Groups, and Tracts are the fundamental building blocks of census data. When in doubt, defining a search in this way will yield consistent results. You may also find a few other area designations: County Subdivisions will give you towns. I have not worked with data at this level before, but it appears to give a reliable way to capture the entire town.

Places (aka Census Designated Places, or CDPs) will give things like town centers. For example, it appears that East Montpelier CDP will give you only East Montpelier Villiage – the 2021 ACS 5 year estimate for the total population there is 61 people +/- 89. Checking population totals is a good way to

make sure that you're looking at the right thing when you look at County Subdivisions or Places. The census does not really do ZIP codes.

Data Privacy:

To protect the privacy of individuals responding to the surveys, there is random noise added to small data samples. In very small areas, this can lead to inaccuracies in the data, though the noise is added in such a way that when the data is rolled up to larger groups it becomes more accurate. For a town the size of East Montpelier, this noise could be significant. For this reason, we always want to look at the largest areas possible (ie tracts rather than block groups or blocks when possible).

Data Sources:

The Census Town Profile is a good first stop for basic information. This actually contains quite a lot, across a number of areas. You can find the East Montpelier town profile page here:

https://data.census.gov/profile/East_Montpelier_town,_Washington_County,_Vermont?g=060XX00US5002321925

For comprehensive data, go to data.census.gov.

Chair Sullivan provided a handout on the Census Data collection process and proceeded to go through the data collection process on-line to provide examples of what data was available and the ease of data collection via this process. He provided a review of the filtering process and how to make State level, to county level, to the town level comparisons.

Review Town Plan Work Plan.

Mr. Sullivan updated the PC on the Town Plan Process:

Town Plan Process

Planning Commission must hold one public hearing on the plan or amendment, providing 30 days' notice (24 V.S.A. § 4384).

Select Board holds 2 hearings on the plan, no less than 30 days after it receives the plan from the Planning Commission (following the Planning Commission's hearing) and no more than 120 days after receipt of the plan. (24 V.S.A. § 4385).

If the plan is not approved within 1 year of the Planning Commission's hearing it is deemed to have been rejected.

Zach is still in the process of completing the notes and comments derived from the review process and the assigned PC members will pick up where they left off with the research and editing process. The timeline and summary presented at the last meeting will be updated based on the process above.

Review Outstanding Issues list from Current town plan

Data collection discussion and next steps for outstanding issues will be discussed at the next meeting.

Updates

- **Capital Improvement Committee-** No Updates. SB approved the CIC budget. Meetings will resume in the spring.
- **Energy Committee-** Zach Sullivan reported no updates and will reach out to discuss timelines and approach for town plan.
- **Resilient Roads Committee-** Work continues, Grant applications in process for \$60K and tree marking for tree removals.
- **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission-** Clarice Cutler will attend the next meeting on 12/12/23 and the following initiatives will be discussed: Winooski Basin Tactical Basin Plan Conformance Letter, Waitsfield Municipal Plan Approval & Confirmation of Planning Process & Certificate of Energy Compliance, VAPDA Regional Future Land Use Initiative, VAPDA Act 250 Local Delegation Report. All are invited to attend.

ZA/DRB Report

A meeting was held on December 5, 2023 to meet the new ZA. We asked about meeting with the PC and Mr. Sullivan will have to reach out to the ZA to make that happen. A ZA activity report was provided, and a single permit was issued for a home office addition on North Street.

Other Business

Mr. Sullivan asked the commission for their ideas for other projects besides the Town Plan that are related to the Town Plan goals and zoning. Ms. Zimmerman would like to look at Development, Growth and Housing and how zoning regulations can reflect those needs. It would be good to encourage growth in EM in meeting housing demands and as it relates to schools. It was suggested that we look at other towns and how they meet these objectives either with density based zoning, PUDs or other initiatives such as increasing rear setbacks to keep Ag land. Ms. Watson also noted that EM has lost housing unit acres to Land Trust preservation and how to make those housing unit acres for growth back up by updating the zoning regulations. We will need to seek out other Land use planning being done in VT.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mark Lane, second by Clarice Cutler. Passed unanimously.

The meeting closed at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Watson

Approved on: December 21, 2023