

Minutes of the East Montpelier Planning Commission - Final

February 1, 2024

PC Members Present: Zach Sullivan (Chair), Mark Lane, Erica Zimmerman (zoom), Clarice Cutler (zoom), Kim Watson (zoom), Gianna Petito (zoom), Maia Stone (Zoom)

PC Members Absent: Nik Khosla, Richard Hall

Call to Order: 7:05pm

Changes to Agenda: None

Public Comment: None.

Review Minutes

The group reviewed the January 18, 2024 minutes.

Motion: To approve the January 18, 2024, minutes as amended. Made by Mark Lane, second by Gianna Petito. Passed unanimously.

Discuss Next Steps on Housing Study

- Mr. Sullivan asked the PC to think about what we have already done that we need to promote regarding housing needs such as the zoning changes we have made to date (village master plan, set backs). This includes things like what is allowed for ADUs and planned unit developments, where we may not need to make additional changes, but we may need to do some educational work to ensure that the community knows about these options.
- Ms. Cutler highlighted the fact that we have tools from the CVRPC who could help with a build-out analysis based on zoning updates. The regional plan is looking at build out analyses into 2025.
- Ms. Zimmerman also asked if we could find out if there are programs that encourage or any incentives for affordable housing development.
- Ms. Cutler noted that our zoning regulations include 2 village designations that provide tax credits for historical buildings and Downstreet Housing developers looks into affordable housing unit development in cities and towns. The limitations in the Village districts in EM are limited due to wastewater.
- Ms. Watson noted that there are options on wastewater which can be overcome if we look at de-centralized systems.

Other limitations for affordable housing are transit needs.

Middlesex has been cheerleading the affordable housing next steps so we will want to look at what they have set up for next steps. Mr. Sullivan will contact Middlesex to look at their progress on housing needs.

- Mr. Sullivan discussed looking at the regulatory requirements versus the non-regulatory approach. What non-regulatory approaches could we take? This could include things like

looking at a build-out analysis to see what is already possible with the current regulations. What are the regulatory changes that might promote more housing? Mr. Sullivan sees this being the area that would intersect with some of the survey work that we are working on, because it's the area where we'd want to understand what kinds of changes would have town people's support.

- Ms. Cutler will ask for a build-out analysis from the CVRPC and discuss regional plan incentives and will do a deeper dive into housing in regional plans.

Discuss standardization of work for group work and plan editing

Mr. Sullivan discussed the need to standardize our work and plan editing tasks. As we start trying to do more big editing/writing projects and as we try to distribute more of the work out, Mr. Sullivan and others think we should have a common platform to work from. Mr. Sullivan and others think that Google Docs may be our easiest option, but he knows that not everyone's set up there so we should talk about how we want to standardize this. He does think that, once we get into editing the town plan, working on local copies in Word, even if everyone has Word (which he is not sure everyone does) becomes incredibly unwieldy. Ms. Watson noted too that Google Docs can be unruly when trying to format the final document and takes quite a bit of time, also. By consensus, we will work in google docs as needed in the town plan editing work.

Discuss potential change to rules of procedure for next year (advance discussion, for rules to be voted on in April)

Mr. Sullivan discussed the upcoming elections, and beyond. After looking at the number of seats that we need to try to fill, he'd like to revisit our rules of procedure and potentially change the rules around what constitutes a quorum. Right now, vacant seats count towards the total for purposes of counting a quorum, so even if we only have 7 members, we'd still need to get 5 people to make quorum and to make a decision. He proposed changing that to not count the vacant seats, so that if we only had 7 confirmed members, we would only need 4 for a quorum. This is also something that we'll bring up with the post-election PC, but he wanted to throw it out here to get people's thoughts in case anyone who's stepping down had strong feelings on it. Members present had no problems with potentially changing the quorum process.

Updates

- **Capital Improvement Committee** – No new updates.
- **Energy Committee** - No new updates.
- **Resilient Roads Committee** – No new updates
- **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission** - Clarice Cutler reported that there will be a meeting on the 13th.

ZA/DRB Report

Curb cut permit. No DRB report

Other Business

Mr. Sullivan discussed that there was a proposal in the legislature that all public meeting offer a hybrid meeting format. He felt that EMPC already offers that so it will not necessarily impact EM. Ms. Zimmerman let the PC know that Dean Hedges, owner of Crystal Springs passed away

and Ms. Watson noted that his daughter will most likely be taking over Crystal Springs Water District.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mark Lane, second by Maia Stone. Passed unanimously.

The meeting closed at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Watson

Approved on: February 15, 2024