

Westfield Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2019
6:00 pm – Westfield Community Center

Present: Brian Dunn, Yvan LaPlume, Shawn Baraw, Pat Sagui (chair), Ellen Fox, Loren Petzoldt
Members of the Public: LaDonna Dunn

Call Meeting to Order: Pat Sagui called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

Additions/Changes to the Agenda: Pat Sagui reviewed the agenda and invited additions or changes. She added an agenda item to appoint Ellen Fox as Secretary. No other items were added or changed.

Motion/Second to Approve Minutes from the December 5, 2018 meeting:
Shawn made a motion to approve the minutes, and Yvan seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously, as written.

Review/Discuss comments received on Draft Town Plan/ amend as needed:
No additional comments have been received. The Draft Town Plan was adopted by Selectboard as proposed.

Appointment of Ellen Fox as Secretary: LaDonna has been serving as acting secretary in absence of a Secretary on the Planning Commission. Thank you LaDonna! Pat Sagui invited nominations for the position of Secretary. Shawn Baraw nominated Ellen Fox. Yvan seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Contact information for Ellen is 802-355-9853.

Updates on Planning Funds/Technical Assistance for Scenic View Community Care Center renovation to affordable housing: Pat shared that the funding for a feasibility study was not awarded. She went on to say that she had a phone meeting with Alison Low, Senior Planner at Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA). Alison has reached out to Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) about the need for funds to do a feasibility study. The VHCB has funds which are allocated to support housing projects for affordable housing projects.

Ellen Fox made a motion to recommend to our Selectboard that we work with Alison to find funding for a feasibility study for an affordable housing project through VHCB, and that the Planning Commission would support the project. Shawn seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Next Steps – Village Designation status: Now that the Town Plan is approved, we can move forward with the Village Designation. Alison (NVDA) fills out the form to apply for Village Designation status. The boundary for the Village could be different from our current zoning district. It has been discussed that the Village Designation might be from the Library to the Town Garage.

Loren Petzoldt joined at 6:23.

Richard Amore with the Vermont Department of Commerce and Community Development has provided information about possible village boundaries. LaDonna will send notes to Planning Commission members from the meeting with Richard Amore. The Planning Commission will use this information to inform recommendation to the selectboard regarding the boundaries for Village Designation. The application process for Village Designation is on a rolling basis: submit application by the first Monday of the month and receive decision by the end of the month. It is realistic for us to submit an application for the March cycle following our February meeting.

Discuss Tasks and Timelines to amend Zoning Bylaw:

Pat mentioned that we get some consulting time from NVDA which will be valuable.

Pat asked LaDonna if there are urgent changes to make to the Zoning Bylaw. LaDonna shared that the areas most in need of clarification are definitions, and enforcement issues. LaDonna also has notes from Tom, Zoning Administrator which identify points which need attention including keeping livestock in the village. There was discussion that livestock issues could be managed with a Town Ordinance. For larger numbers of animals, livestock are regulated by the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets under Required Agricultural Practices. An overall goal of the revision of the Zoning Bylaw is to clarify terms (add a glossary) and tailor the language to be understandable and specific to Westfield Town governance.

Pat suggested that we can send a survey with the tax bill to get feedback on changes to the Zoning Bylaw. We will assemble a document to track all proposed changes to the Bylaw. Loren proposed that we divide the Bylaw into smaller sections and work on clarifying language first. Smaller sections will be more manageable for Planning Commission members and allow us to become more familiar with the contents. Pat will organize and coordinate that work and ask for volunteers by email. In the meantime, all Planning Commission members will read the Zoning Bylaw to become familiar with the document.

Next Meeting: Date/Time/Agenda: It was agreed that the 3rd Monday of the month will work for members to meet, 6:00 pm in the Westfield Community Center. The next meeting will be February 18.

Other Business:

LaDonna posed the question as to whether the Planning Commission meeting minutes need to be signed by the members of the Planning Commission. Because the approval of the minutes is documented in subsequent meeting minutes, it was agreed that there is no need for signatures on the minutes.

LaDonna reported that the Selectboard has approved a stipend of \$25 per meeting for Planning Commission members. LaDonna will disburse stipends as they accumulate.

The Westfield Community Center will be the regular meeting place for Planning Commission meetings, rather than the Town Clerk's office, going forward.

Adjourn: Shawn made a motion to adjourn, Loren seconded the motion, unanimous vote to adjourn at 7:10.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ellen Fox