

**CITY OF VERGENNES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 2013**

Members Present: Shannon Haggett-Chair, Tim Cook, Rebecca Duffy, Jason Farrell,
Morgan Kittredge, Alexandria McGuire, Stacy Raphael, Mike Winslow

Also Present: Mel Hawley, Zoning Administrator

Guests: Ozzy McGuire

Shannon Haggett called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The minutes to the regular meeting of June 17, 2013 were reviewed. Alex McGuire pointed out a typographical error. Mike Winslow moved to approve the amended minutes. The motion was seconded by Jason Farrell with all voting in favor except Alex McGuire and Stacy Raphael abstaining as they were not present at the June meeting.

The Planning Commission revisited discussion of private use of public lands which was initiated at the regular meeting of May 20. Mike had originally brought up the subject as the Planning Commission has taken on some of the duties and responsibilities that would otherwise be assigned to a Conservation Committee. Jason reported that he had conversations with officials in Burlington, but that they did not have any applicable policies or ordinances that would be useful to us.

Shannon stated that Stacy had uncovered a news story in Maine that might be helpful. The story cited "Maine HP0293, LD421 – An Act to Prohibit the Unauthorized Harvesting of Wild Mushrooms and Fiddleheads". Shannon added that he had reviewed the legislation and that it centered on private land instead of public land. He mentioned that the law also covered harvesting of Christmas trees and asked if there were anything to address someone cutting down a tree on the City Green. Mel responded that there were ordinances covering vandalism which would address that concern.

It was then questioned whether the Planning Commission should recommend an ordinance, a policy, or doing nothing at all. Rebecca asked if educational signs might be appropriate. It was suggested that this kind of signage might exacerbate the problem by causing more people to harvest fiddleheads. Ultimately it was decided that no action was necessary at this time, but that we would keep the item "on our radar" in the event that future action is needed.

Committee Updates:

Transportation: Mel updated everyone about the city's application for a grant under the VTrans 2013 Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. The request is focused on construction pertaining to the

extension of the sidewalk from Vergennes Redemption to Champlain Discount Foods on Main Street (Rte 22A) in Vergennes.

As a follow-up from June's meeting, Shannon asked everyone for their top recommendations from the report done by the Middlebury College students and/or from the set of priorities from the public forum of May 22. Here are those recommendations.

Rebecca's recommendations:

- 1) Add pedestrian signals at intersections of Main St. and Green St., and Main St. and Monkton Road.
- 2) Evaluate sidewalk repair costs and develop a long-term plan to adequately fund sidewalk maintenance and repairs.
- 3) Install radar speed check signs.

Tim's recommendations:

- 1) Alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians by adding texture to the crosswalks to make them more visible and installing in-street crosswalk signs to alert motorists of crosswalks.
- 2) Create raised crosswalks in downtown.

Alex's recommendations:

- 1) Alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians by adding texture to the crosswalks to make them more visible and installing in-street crosswalk signs to alert motorists of crosswalks.
- 2) Create raised crosswalks in downtown.
- 3) Install crosswalk "bulb-outs" to reduce roadway width at crossing points, improve driver visibility of pedestrians, and reduce vehicle speeds.

Mike's recommendations:

- 1) Add pedestrian signals at intersections of Main St. and Green St., and Main St. and Monkton Road.
- 2) Alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians by adding texture to the crosswalks to make them more visible and installing in-street crosswalk signs to alert motorists of crosswalks.

Stacy's recommendations:

- 1) Add pedestrian signals at intersections of Main St. and Green St., and Main St. and Monkton Road.
- 2) Install radar speed check signs.

Jason's recommendations:

- 1) Add pedestrian signals at intersections of Main St. and Green St., and Main St. and Monkton Road.
- 2) Explore creative ways to provide street parking in the School St. and Green St. area, while increasing pedestrian visibility. For example, opposite side of the street parking.

Morgan's recommendations:

- 1) Install radar speed check signs.
- 2) Explore reducing parking in the School St. and Green St. area to increase pedestrian and motorist visibility.

- 3) Evaluate sidewalk repair costs and develop a long-term plan to adequately fund sidewalk maintenance and repairs.

Shannon's recommendations:

- 1) Add pedestrian signals at intersections of Main St. and Green St., and Main St. and Monkton Road.
- 2) Alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians by adding texture to the crosswalks to make them more visible and installing in-street crosswalk signs to alert motorists of crosswalks.
- 3) Install radar speed check signs.

Education: No update at this time.

Stormwater: Mike reported that Jim Pease from the Agency of Natural Resources had gotten back to him after reviewing the city's current stormwater policies. Mr. Pease noted that aside from plans to handle water from large weather events, our plans look good. Mel added that we may want to look at improvement of retention ponds, such as the one at the high school.

Jason Farrell asked if Mr. Pease had noted anything about Fisher Memorial Park as discussed during the June meeting. Mike reported that he had not communicated about that site.

Mel noted that the two critical areas in the city - at Monkton Road and Armory Lane, and in the Crosby Farm neighborhood have been resolved.

Tree/Urban Forestry: Mike reported that he has added "species" and "condition" qualifiers to his Google-based crowd-sourcing map for the tree inventory. He also noted that some of the recommended species in the current tree plan are non-native or even invasive. He questioned if the plan should be amended to reflect that. Mel suggested that it might be better to include an addendum to the plan to note these species and recommendations surrounding their use.

No new business was introduced.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk