

**CITY OF VERGENNES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2016**

Members Present: Shannon Haggett-Chair, Mike Winslow-Vice Chair, Jason Farrell, Cheryl Brinkman, Tim Cook, John Coburn

Members Absent: Morgan Kittredge (on an approved leave of absence)

Also Present: Mel Hawley, Zoning Administrator

Shannon called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. No amendments to the agenda were brought forth.

Shannon asked Mel if Hans Vorsteveld, whom Mel had invited to the meeting, was planning to attend. Mel responded that Mr. Vorsteveld was expected as he had not heard otherwise. Shannon explained to everyone that Mr. Vorsteveld had recently purchased a property that is in the Historic Neighborhood District. The property also abuts other properties owned by Mr. Vorsteveld that are in the Central Business District and Mr. Vorsteveld was asking if the recently purchased property ought to be in the Central Business District instead of the Historic Neighborhood District.

Mel showed everyone the property in question on a land use map and noted that the property had been in the Central Business District until 2009 when it was moved into the newly created Historic Neighborhood District. Several members stated that reclassifying the property may be valid. Shannon added that he would want public feedback from residents near the property before any changes would be considered.

The minutes to the regular meeting of December 28, 2015 were reviewed. Cheryl moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mike with all voting in favor.

The Planning Commission next began to discuss items that should be considered as updates to the Municipal Development Plan from the list of priorities generated at last month's meeting.

- 1) Incorporation of a solar siting entry. Shannon presented draft language based on model language developed by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission. Cheryl also presented model language developed by the Center for Climate Law at Columbia Law School. The group had a lengthy discussion about whether or not the Planning Commission should spend time and energy on developing an entry for the plan since under present circumstances we would not be able to develop regulations that would match any plan entry. This is because currently all decisions surrounding solar energy projects resides with the Vermont Public Service Board. Mel suggested that it might be

helpful to have someone from Green Mountain Power come to a future Planning Commission meeting to help us better understand the current landscape in regard to solar regulations as well as what may be happening in the future and how this might be applicable for Vergennes. Shannon said he would contact Green Mountain Power about having someone attend a Planning Commission meeting.

- 2) Developing a plan for public outreach. John presented everyone with a preliminary plan to test for community consensus. The first question was to determine our desired sample size. Using 2010 census data and accepted statistical analysis practices, John stated that in order to attain a 95% statistical certainty we would want a sample of between 289 – 335 responses for any surveys. John recommended Google Forms to create the surveys and tools like Google Forms, Bit.ly, Front Porch Forum and Facebook to get citizens to be aware of and participate in the surveys. Next the group discussed whether there should be one longer survey to cover the items where we are seeking input or multiple shorter surveys. It was agreed that shorter surveys would likely yield better results, but Mike was concerned that asking people to participate in multiple surveys might be confusing and cumbersome.
- 3) Developing a vision or plan for City-owned properties. Mel stated that the principal properties where he would like public input include: Fisher Memorial Park, the outdoor classroom located near the Vergennes Union Elementary School, Pumphouse Island, MacIntosh Park, and where recycling collection takes place. This led to a lengthy discussion of the outdoor classroom. Cheryl, who is also a member of the School Board for the Vergennes Union Elementary School talked about the challenges she's encountered in obtaining funds for maintaining the property as there are multiple entities involved. She also outlined past efforts to improve the property and make it more usable to the community.
- 4) Incorporation of recommendations from the Strong Communities, Better Connections (SCBC) program. Shannon, Mike and Mel informed everyone that a public forum would be held in late February. Tim asked Mel for a hardcopy of the preliminary draft of the report. Mel supplied Tim with the draft report.
- 5) Incorporation of an updated Urban Forestry Plan using information from the recent UVM tree survey. Shannon and Mike reported that they had a meeting scheduled with Claire Tebbs from the Addison County Regional Planning Commission in early January but the meeting didn't occur. They added that they can develop an entry from the recent survey.

Transportation items update – No update.

Education items update – No update.

Stormwater items update – No update.

Tree/Urban Forestry items update – Update covered in the Urban Forestry section above.

Materials Management items update – Cheryl reported that Teri Kuczynski, the District Manager for the Addison County Solid Waste Management District, had reviewed Cheryl's draft plan entry for the materials management and had provided her with notes. Cheryl will review Teri's notes and share them with the Planning Commission at a later date. Cheryl asked Mel about how

the City handles haulers whose license with the Addison County Solid Waste Management District is in jeopardy. Mel responded that the City Council grants an annual vendor license. Jason noted that the Ordinance requires that the Applicant has complied with all the requirements of the Laws of Vermont. Mel added if a vendor was out of compliance, the District Manager could notify the City and the vendor license could be revoked.

Under new business, Jason reported that he had been asked by a city resident if there were any regulations prohibiting a property owner from “clear-cutting” trees on their own property within city limits. He said that he had told the resident that there were no regulations covering that activity.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk