

**CITY OF VERGENNES
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2015**

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

Members Absent: Jason Farrell, Morgan Kittredge

Also Present: Mel Hawley, Zoning Administrator, Barbara Bosworth, Tim Bosworth

Shannon called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Shannon asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Cheryl responded that she would like to have the commission review her suggested changes to the regulations not pertaining to Article XVI if time permitted. Everyone agreed. Shannon re-introduced Barbara and Tim Bosworth. Barbara is a graduate student in Historic Preservation at UVM and attended the meeting to observe the process of the planning commission discussing regulations for the Historic Neighborhood District.

The minutes to the regular meeting and annual meeting of February 16, 2015 were reviewed. Cheryl moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by John with all voting in favor.

Shannon informed the commission that Rebecca Rey had resigned earlier in the month to focus on family and business projects. As the commission had been functioning with eight members instead of the normal seven, the commission decided it did not need to seek a replacement. Mel noted that the City Council would be informed at their next meeting. He also determined that the balance of term expiration dates were not affected by Rebecca's resignation. Mike asked about Morgan and Shannon reported that he had heard from her earlier in the day and that she had not delivered her baby yet.

As another part of the agenda item of membership update Shannon noted that Cheryl had been elected to the VUES school board which is also scheduled for the third Monday of each month. Everyone congratulated Cheryl on her election. Shannon asked if the group would consider changing the planning commission meeting schedule to either the second or fourth Monday of each month. Everyone expressed a willingness to do so. Shannon asked if such a move would require a change in the rules of procedure. It was determined that such a change would be necessary. Shannon stated that he would include it on the agenda for the April meeting and that as the rules require, the proposed amendment would be distributed to the members in writing at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Mike said that would be a good way to proceed so that the group could receive opinions from the entire commission, including Jason and Morgan who were not present.

The planning commission continued its discussion on proposed updates to the zoning and subdivision regulations. The discussion focused on completing the proposed changes of Article XVI that had been discussed at the January meeting. The group held a lengthy discussion of Tim's draft of Sections 1604.F.10 – 1604.F.14 covering demolition in the Historic Neighborhood District before settling on a synthesis of Tim's draft and Mike's earlier draft.

Next the group reviewed Rebecca's proposed draft of Sections 1604.F.2, 1604.F.3 and 1604.F.9 covering building additions in the Historic Neighborhood District, keeping most of her draft intact.

The group reviewed Shannon's draft of section 1609.F.2.e covering ground floor residential use in the Central Business District. Mike suggested a few grammar changes and the group accepted the draft.

As Mike was absent during the February meeting, the commission reviewed work done during that meeting on Morgan's draft of Section 1613.E.1 through 1613.E.15 covering specific standards in the Northern Gateway District. Through that process Mike suggested that section 1613.E.7, which had been removed in February, be reinstated with "shall be encouraged" replacing "shall be employed." Everyone agreed.

Shannon asked if anyone had any other proposed changes for Article XVI. He reminded the group that we would have another opportunity to review the article, but that he wanted to complete proposed regulation updates as soon as reasonably possible so the planning commission could move on to other projects. No one objected.

The group then reviewed Cheryl's proposed drafts for other articles in the regulations. In Article II, Cheryl proposed updating the information regarding open meeting laws to specifically match those laws. Mel suggested that it be updated to read, "...shall be posted in accordance with the state's open meeting laws..." to cover any changes in those laws between iterations of the regulations. Everyone agreed.

Next in Section 405 covering home occupations, Cheryl suggested replacing "beauty parlor" with "salon/spa" as the term "beauty parlor" was dated. Everyone agreed.

In Section 502 covering functions of the development review board, Cheryl asked if we ought to add "Review of the demolition of any building in the Historic Neighborhood District" as we are proposing they do that in Article XVI. Mel stated that as that review is being proposed, the new line needs to be added in Section 502.

Cheryl, who is the City representative and the current chair of the Addison Council Solid Waste Management District (ACSWMD) Board of Supervisors, suggested that we consider adding language in Article IX for solid waste disposal mandating that solid waste be disposed of in accordance with ACSWMD's Waste Management Ordinances. In Article X Cheryl suggested adding setbacks from wetlands in addition to the existing language outlining setbacks to bodies of water. These two drafts began a lengthy discussion surrounding the role of zoning regulations versus regulations and ordinances set forth by other entities. During the conversation, the group reviewed the definitions of class 1, class 2 and class 3 wetlands, and who had what authority over them. Ultimately the group agreed that these types of proposals should only be added to zoning regulations when the proposals are more stringent than the existing regulations in place. In the case of class 3 wetlands for the City of Vergennes, none are currently mapped, which would need to be the first step in this process. For now, these proposals were left alone.

Transportation Committee update – Shannon stated that the transportation task force was scheduled to meet on March 25th. He noted that he planned to propose that the task force look into developing a sidewalk inventory for the City as mentioned during the City Council's last meeting. Such an inventory would help identify and prioritize projects. He said that this was more important now more than ever as Mel had noted during the City Council meeting that the point system for grant applications had changed and that points are added for applications involving projects specifically noted in the municipal development plan. Mel elaborated that as competition for limited funds increase the City should place itself in the best possible position by cataloging desired projects in the plan. Shannon then added that this was why he wanted to complete the regulation update, so that the group can focus on amendments of the plan. He said that with the state developing a master plan for

the state-owned land in the City which includes the Northlands Job Corps Center, the plan work about to get underway with the Strong Communities, Better Connections program, and the City's Downtown Designation renewal up in 2017, we would need to be ready with an amended plan.

Education Committee update – Shannon noted that in conjunction with the transportation task force he had contacted administration officials at both VUES and VUHS about enlisting their support in the Strong Communities, Better Connections planning process and that as talk of the sidewalk inventory develops perhaps involving students in that. He also added that he had been in contact with the instructor for the Modern Citizenship class at VUHS and knew that attending a public meeting was a class requirement. He stated that future planning commission meetings may have guests from the class.

Stormwater Committee update – Mike informed the group that the Lake Champlain Committee had recently been awarded a grant to evaluate the stormwater system in Crosby Farms which will include recommended action for remediating issues. He had a draft press release and was obtaining quotes on the process from Mel and Shannon. He said the next step was contracting with Otter Creek Engineering for related services.

Tree/Urban Forestry Committee update – Mike and Mel presented the group with hard copies of the “Vergennes Public Tree Inventory Report” which was prepared by the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program and the University of Vermont Land Stewardship Program. Copies will also be made available to the public at City Hall and at the Bixby Library. Mike asked Mel if there was also a training workshop planned that would advise the Public Works Department on best practices for urban forestry management. Mel said he thought so, but noted that nothing had been scheduled yet.

Materials Management Committee update – Cheryl informed the group that currently Vergennes is okay in how the recycling services are operating, but as new regulations are phased in, if a handler is collecting one type of materials (e.g. recyclables, trash, organics/compostable materials) then it must handle all types of materials. Cheryl will help draft a section to better address materials management as potential amendments to the municipal development plan.

No new business was brought up.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk