

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

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

Members Absent: Jason Farrell, Morgan Kittredge

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. Mel shared a letter from Patricia Emerson who lives at 125 West Main Street asking the Planning Commission to consider reclassifying her property and one abutting property from the Low Density Residential District to the Medium Density Residential District. The current land use map was reviewed and brief discussion ensued regarding the history of the zoning classification for the two parcels. Afterward everyone agreed to propose a change to Medium Density Residential District for the parcels to be included in the Municipal Development Plan update currently underway.

The minutes to the regular meeting of June 27, 2016 were reviewed. Cheryl moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Tim with all voting in favor.

The Planning Commission next began to discuss items that should be considered as updates to the Municipal Development Plan.

- 1) Green energy map: The Planning Commission reviewed the updated green energy map that Josh Castonguay from Green Mountain Power Corporation had provided. Shannon noted the map included topographic information and identified class 1 and class 2 wetlands. He said he would create a proposed map identifying prime solar development areas by using the map and overlaying the current Land Use Map and Zoning Map. Tim asked if it would be possible to show existing solar projects to scale on the map instead of as points. Shannon responded he would attempt to include them, adding he would make two separate maps for review at the next meeting.
- 2) Solar survey: Shannon passed around John's updated solar survey. Mike suggested we include language in the last two questions asking respondents to identify areas would be well-suited and not well-suited for solar arrays. John stated both Mel and Shannon have edit privileges to the Google-based survey and asked if one of them could make the edits as he was traveling. Shannon said he would make the edits and send the final version to everyone via email.

- 3) Strong Communities, Better Connections Grant Project: Mel provided copies of the updated draft final report for everyone to review. He reported the steering committee had met on Friday, July, 22<sup>nd</sup> and proposed additional format changes to make the document easier to use. This includes eliminating several columns in the implementation tables to allow the use of 8-1/2" x 11" paper instead of an 11" x 17" fold-out. This will allow for easier integration into the Municipal Development Plan as well as making the document less busy. Mel added "Next Steps" recommendations will be moved from the implementation tables to their own section immediately following the implementation schedules. Shannon noted there is a meeting scheduled for Friday, July 29<sup>th</sup> with representatives of the Agency of Transportation and Agency of Commerce and Community Development so the changes will need to be made quickly. Mel responded Beth Isler from Toole Design Group would have the changes made in time.

Mel said he knew there were still some funds left in the grant and had asked Jackie Cassino with the Agency of Transportation if it would be acceptable to use those funds to have more copies of the final plan printed. He said the request would be approved. The Planning Commission expressed that this was a good idea.

The Planning Commission then discussed the three task forces developed from the Community Visit program administered by the Vermont Center on Rural Development. Mel noted the Vergennes Partnership has absorbed the functions of the Economic Task Force. Mike added the Basin and Riverside Task Force had dwindled in size and while there was commitment to do "hands-on" projects, they weren't prepared for additional responsibilities. Tim stated he thought the turning point was when at a City Council meeting, Mel asked about a maintenance and improvement budget from their task force. Tim said no one on the task force is equipped to develop such a budget and being asked to do so crippled the task force. Shannon reported the Transportation Task Force had not met in 2016 and there were only four participants at last count. Mel asked if the Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan might breathe new life into the task forces and added he wished the project had been completed six months earlier; the length of time between start and finish had contributed to waning enthusiasm. Everyone agreed. Mel said more discussion should occur to determine which entities should take ownership of the various functions of the task forces. Everyone agreed.

The Planning Commission discussed the status of a city sidewalk survey and inventory. Shannon said he had been asked by Mayor Benton to provide a list of improvement recommendations to the City Council at their next meeting on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. John reported he had completed the assessment and entry of "hot spots". Shannon said he had pulled up screen-shots of the hot spots covering severe cracks, missing sidewalk and uneven sidewalk. He showed everyone the list and proposed using it as the start of the recommendations for improvement. Mel suggested including areas that might benefit from sidewalk extensions. The group came up with the following areas:

- West Main Street (from Hopkins Road to City limit – noting a sidewalk extension on West Main Street from Hillside Acres to Hopkins Road is in process through the Claybrook Development)
- Pantown Road (from First Street to City limit)
- Comfort Hill (from High Street to City limit)

- High Street (connect Comfort Hill to Macdonough Drive)
- South Water Street (connect South Water Street to South Maple Street and Victory Street)
- Booska Court (connect Booska Court to Green Meadow Acres)
- Maple Manor
- Booth Woods

The Planning Commission then discussed the idea of eliminating sidewalk on South Water Street – keeping sidewalk on only one side of the street from Roberts Street to South Maple Street. This was suggested as the condition of the sidewalk on South Water Street is generally poor and in places very narrow making winter maintenance an issue. Tim expressed concern with this idea, feeling that retaining sidewalk on both sides is in keeping with the historic neighborhood. More discussion is needed on this subject and Shannon said he would encourage the City Council to seek public feedback before making any changes. Shannon will document the list and the discussion and forward as recommendations. Mel added he would like Jim Larrow, Department of Public Works Supervisor, to have access to the map and survey. Mel said he would like to have this be a living document which can be used and updated. John said he could give Jim edit privileges.

Transportation items update – No update.

Education items update – No update.

Stormwater items update – Shannon reported at the most recent meeting of the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, senior planner Claire Tebbs had made a presentation on a proposed stormwater abatement project for the Washington Street area of Middlebury. He added that after the presentation, Claire approached him about pursuing similar projects for Vergennes. He added he responded to Claire that Vergennes has already identified several projects based on mapping from the Agency of Natural Resources, some of which are already in process, but we could certainly look at others as well.

Tree/Urban Forestry items update – Mike asked Mel if a date had been set to work with Elise Schadler, Urban and Community Outreach Professional with UVM Extension. Mel said no date had been set and added he would forward the most recent email from Elise to Mike.

Materials Management items update – Cheryl reported she had spoken with Teresa Kuczynski, the Executive Director of the Addison County Solid Waste Management District, regarding who should communicate new rules with independent trash haulers operating at the mobile drop-off area that is on City-owned property. Cheryl said Teresa responded ultimately the municipality is responsible but she would be happy to communicate with the haulers if needed.

No additional new business was proposed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk