

**CITY OF VERGENNES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2016**

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

Members Absent: John Coburn

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 were proposed.

The minutes to the regular meeting of August 22, 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 reviewed the results of the solar survey. John collected the results and put together a PowerPoint presentation. In John's absence, Shannon walked everyone through the presentation. Shannon noted there were 82 responses to the survey and John had originally projected a need of 300 or so surveys to be statistically accurate. Mel pointed out John's projection was based on total population, including minors and 82 responses were statistically viable. Mike confirmed this and everyone agreed. The results received thus far indicate the Planning Commission should move forward with solar energy guidelines in the plan update.

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

The Planning Commission reviewed proposed changes to the plan agreed upon thus far in a version of the document with changes being tracked. The principal areas included a larger Solid Waste or Materials Management section and an expanded energy section with solar energy guidelines and a newly proposed Green Energy Overlay District. Cheryl asked if Shannon ever received any of the other minor proposed changes she had suggested. He responded he didn't think he had, and then she listed them. Everyone agreed.

Morgan asked if references to wind energy were appropriate to include in the energy section and in the Green Energy Overlay District since all our discussions and public input pertain to solar energy. After discussion everyone agreed we should limit the update to solar energy.

Mel reported he and Shannon had proofread the most recent version of the Vergennes Downtown- Basin Master Plan and had noted minor grammar and spelling changes to be

updated. He delivered the corrected versions to Claire Tebbs at the Addison County Regional Planning Commission so she could update the final report. Hard copies would then be printed and disseminated as needed. He added Vergennes would also have an electronic version of the plan after Claire's updates.

Shannon stated the Planning Commission needed to determine what to include in the update regarding permitted ground-floor residential use in the Central Business District and the proposed redistricting of two properties on West Main Street currently in the Low Density Residential District but may be better suited to be in the Medium Density Residential District. Everyone agreed the properties should be redistricted.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding how ground floor use came to be permitted in the Central Business District. Jason noted the Development Review Board had not received a single application for ground-floor residential use since the regulation change. Tim suggested the Planning Commission propose the previous plan language which does not allow the use in the district. Everyone agreed.

Next the Planning Commission discussed the timeline for the plan update. Shannon stated he thought they were on track to have a deliverable product ready for public hearing by the end of 2016. Mel added the Vergennes Partnership needs to submit a preliminary renewal of the City's downtown designation in November and have a full application by February 2017. The Planning Commission still needs the Vergennes Partnership entry for the plan update.

Transportation items update – Shannon alerted everyone about two recent meetings regarding transportation issues affecting Vergennes. On September 19th, the Addison County Regional Planning Commission held a public meeting as part of the Transportation Advisory Council's update of the transportation plan for the county. He said he brought up the issue that Vermont Route 22A, which is a designated truck corridor is also Main Street for Vergennes and runs through our state designated downtown. He added these two designations are in conflict with one another and creates problems for our downtown. Lucy Gibson from Dubois & King who is providing project management for the plan update stated this situation would be included in their work. Dubois & King also have set up a Wikimap for public comment on potential transportation hot spots in the county. Shannon shared the address with the Planning Commission and encouraged everyone to identify any problem areas on the map.

The second public meeting was on September 20th to discuss the repair and possible replacement of the Vermont Route 17 Bridge #8 over Otter Creek. Shannon said he was unable to attend this meeting, but knew the state would likely pursue the recommendation to divert Route 17 traffic through Vergennes for the duration of the project.

Education items update – No update.

Stormwater items update – No update.

Tree/Urban Forestry items update – Mel asked Tim and Mike if either of them had the hardcopy version of the Vergennes Urban Forestry Management Plan prepared by LandWorks in 1998.

He needs to provide a copy to Elise Schadler, Urban and Community Outreach Professional with UVM Extension. Mike responded he may have it at home and would return it as soon as he could locate it.

Materials Management items update – No update.

Under new business Mel advised everyone he had a situation where a homeowner in the Historic Neighborhood District wants to demolish a garage. Under the current Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, demolition in this district requires authorization from the Development Review Board. This includes a public hearing process which could take several months. Mel noted the regulations related to demolition are not the same in every district and wondered if this was truly the Planning Commission's intent. The topic was discussed and everyone agreed demolition in the Historic Neighborhood District should go through the public process as currently regulated.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk