

**CITY OF VERGENNES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2015**

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

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

Also Present: Mel Hawley, Zoning Administrator, Chris Fuller, Mike O’Daniel,
David Austin

Shannon called the regular meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. immediately after the public hearing. He asked if there were any amendments to the agenda and hearing none, asked visitors if they would like to make any comments. All visitors stated that they would like to reserve comment until the group reached item four, the discussion of testimony from the public hearing.

The minutes to the regular meeting of August 24, 2015 were reviewed. Mike moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by John with all voting in favor.

The Planning Commission then began discussion of testimony submitted at the public hearing. David Austin reiterated his testimony regarding Section 1609.F.2 concerning ground-floor residential use in the Central Business District. Mr. Austin stressed that stronger and less subjective language would be beneficial. He said that he could argue either way regarding the “integrity of the commercial use” and suggested that if the bullet point included “esthetic and economic integrity of the commercial use” it would be stronger. He also encouraged a quantifiable limit to the amount of allowable residential use. Shannon suggested adding a fifth bullet point in between points three and four to read, “The residential use does not exceed 20% of the building footprint” and that the last bullet point be amended to read, “. . .and the residential use does not compromise the esthetic and economic integrity of the commercial use as determined by the Development Review Board.” Everyone agreed.

Mike O’Daniel reiterated his testimony in regard to Section 1603. Agricultural and Rural Residential District. Everyone agreed to revise Section 1603.B to remove the phrase “as an adjunct to a primarily agricultural use”. There was a lengthy discussion about whether or not a one-family dwelling should be a permitted use or a conditional use. Ultimately it was agreed that it should be a permitted use. The group also discussed the concept of clustering and the impact of clustering on lot size and open space in a planned unit development. The group agreed that the dimensional standards for the district should be a minimum density of five acres for each one-family dwelling with a minimum lot size of one acre for a planned unit development. Other

uses through planned unit development would require a minimum density of four acres per unit with a minimum lot size of one acre.

The group discussed and agreed to propose the amendments supplied by Mel which were:

Section 202 – language at the end of the first paragraph be amended to read, “Public notice shall be placed in or near the city clerk’s office, two public places as determined by the City Council, and posted on the City’s Web-site, www.vergennes.org.”

Section 1205 – be amended to read, “No driveway shall be wider than is reasonably necessary to safely accommodate traffic passing over it and in no event be wider than twenty-two (22) feet unless approved or required by the Development Review Board.”

Section 1410 – remove the last sentence of the section which reads, “Driveways and sidewalks are not included in calculating coverage

Mike moved that the Planning Commission authorize Shannon to make the proposed amendments to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations as discussed at this meeting and to then present those proposed amendments to the City Council at their meeting of September 29, 2015. Tim seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

The group next discussed the 45-day notice for a proposed solar array at Comfort Hill Kennel. Shannon stated that the City Council had already discussed the notice and did not plan to take any action. He provided a copy of the warning and the development details to anyone to review.

Shannon, Mel and Mike updated everyone on the Strong Communities, Better Connections community visioning events that had occurred the previous weekend. These included a set of walks to assess current conditions, temporary bike lanes on Main Street as well as traffic-calming techniques and access control items such as bulb-outs. David Raphael from LandWorks had also begun constructing a “pop-up” information kiosk at Vergennes Falls Park. Mike reported that most of the public feedback and commentary he heard was positive with only one person stating that he thought the idea of bike lanes was dangerous and a safety concern. Mel noted that he was concerned about a bike lane on the southbound lane of Main Street next to parallel parking spaces as the downhill grade would mean bikes travelling more quickly could be at risk to someone opening a car door without looking.

Mel and Shannon updated everyone regarding Week’s School Property Master Plan project. Shannon provided a copy of the final draft for review. As mentioned at the August meeting, the plan is really a first step and if a more comprehensive plan was desired, the state legislature would need to fund further work.

Transportation Committee update – Shannon reported that the Transportation Task Force had not met since August 18, 2015 but the sidewalk inventory assessment information had been completed and forwarded to Alderman Jeff Fritz who is also chairs the Northlands Job Corps Center Community Relations Council, and VUHS co-principal Jay Stetzel for student volunteers

to help in assessing sidewalks. Mel announced that the City had been awarded the VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program grant to extend the sidewalk on Main Street from Kennedy Brothers to Champlain Discount Foods and the Police Station.

Education Committee update – No update.

Stormwater Committee update – Mike reported that the Lake Champlain Committee is still waiting for cost estimates from Otter Creek Engineering for the Crosby Farm stormwater collection system and retention pond project. He also noted there may be grants available in the near future for audits of impervious surfaces for schools and he would continue to update everyone as more details became available.

Tree/Urban Forestry Committee update – Mel reported he and Elise Schadler had scheduled tree maintenance training for Friday, October 8, 2015. He added that all members of the Public Works Department would be in attendance.

Materials Management Committee update – No update.

No new business was discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk