

**CITY OF VERGENNES  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING AND ANNUAL MEETING  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2014**

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

Also Present: Mel Hawley, Zoning Administrator; Emily Brodsky, Team leader UVM Urban and Community Forestry Program; Courtney Crowley; Bonnie Ricord; Michelle DesLauriers; Nick Brown; Flore Costume - UVM students; Deb Healy; Mykenzie Duffy

Shannon Haggett called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Shannon introduced Emily Brodsky who along with the UVM students presented the results of the Urban and Community Forestry Project that took place in Vergennes in September. The team explained that the project has three steps, 1) an inventory of trees in public spaces, 2) creation of a management plan, and 3) training for city staff and volunteers to effectively maintain the inventory and manage the plan.

During the project the team inventoried 519 trees, recording species, size and health. They explained that the management plan would use the inventory as a baseline, would outline a pruning and mulching schedule and would include a planting plan. It will also identify potential funding sources and will recommend the creation of a volunteer Tree Advisory Committee to build community support for the ongoing management of urban forestry initiatives for the City. The team reported that the management plan would be completed and available in early December.

The minutes to the regular meeting of October 20, 2014 were reviewed. Cheryl moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Tim with all voting in favor except Cheryl, abstaining as she was not present at the meeting.

The Planning Commission Rules of Procedure requires that a reorganization meeting be held annually in November. The rules require the election of officers. Morgan moved that the current slate of Officers, Shannon Haggett as Chair, Mike Winslow as Vice Chair and Mel Hawley as Clerk be re-elected. The motion was seconded by John with all voting in favor.

The rules also require that the Planning Commission Rules of Procedure be subject to re-adoption at the annual meeting in November. Cheryl noted that there was a typographical error in section IV, sub-section D. She also asked if the rules should include mention of posting agendas and minutes to be in compliance with current state regulations surrounding open meeting laws. There was a brief discussion about the subject and everyone agreed that this be included. Shannon noted that Section I.C outlines the procedure for amendments and requires

that any proposed amendments be presented in writing to each member of the Commission at least 48 hours preceding the meeting at which the vote is taken. Jason moved that the annual meeting be recessed until the December regular meeting when the proposed amendments may be presented, discussed and voted upon. The motion was seconded by Mike with all voting in favor.

Next the group discussed Article I of the current Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. Shannon presented model definitions of “Playhouse” and “Treehouse” that might help craft a definition for our regulations. He noted that this was because coming up with a definition was included in the group’s “parking lot” of potential changes. After some discussion it was agreed that a definition for playhouse or treehouse wouldn’t be needed in Article I. Instead the subject could be handled in Section 312 – Exemptions to Zoning Permits. The group continued through Article I and discussed other possible additions or exclusions to the definitions.

Both Jason and Mike asked about the effectiveness of reviewing the current regulations article by article. The group discussed if it would be better to focus on areas where we know updates will need to be made. Everyone agreed to be prepared to discuss the new Low Density Residential District, the Northern Gateway District and the Historic Neighborhood District at the December meeting.

Under committee updates, Mike updated the group on the status of the stormwater grant being pursued in conjunction with Lake Champlain Committee. He noted a final decision will be made in early 2015. Shannon updated the group on the status of the Strong Communities, Better Connections Grant. He stated that a final decision is expected in December. Cheryl asked about the history of the committees and wondered if it would be helpful to form a solid waste or materials management committee. In her role as Chair of the ACSWMD, she could provide useful information and guidance. The group agreed that this would be a good idea.

Under new business Mel presented the proposal by AllEarth Renewables, Inc. on behalf of Vermont AllSun Solar IV, LLC regarding the Proposed Vermont Buildings and General Services Vergennes Solar Project to construct a 500kW facility on State-owned property located on the west side of Comfort Hill across from Comfort Hill Kennels. The group reviewed the document and discussed what the Planning Commission’s role in the process might be. Shannon noted that the property was scheduled to be the subject of a master plan and that we would be stakeholders in the long-term vision for the property. Mel stated that the RFP for the master plan was just released earlier in the week. Several people noted that the proposed project seems to pre-empt the findings of the master plan. Mel suggested keeping the project on the agenda in coming months.

Finally, Mel and Shannon reported that the Addison County Regional Planning Commission voted to approve the Vergennes municipal development plan at their last meeting on November 12. This approval could make it easier for the City to obtain grants.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk