

**CITY OF VERGENNES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING AND ANNUAL MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2016**

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

Also Present: Mel Hawley, Zoning Administrator; Mayor Bill Benton; Josh Donabedian, Transportation Planner – Addison County Regional Planning Commission; Brent Rakowski – Transportation Advisory Committee

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.

Shannon began a discussion of pedestrian safety by introducing Josh Donabedian, Transportation Planner for the Addison County Regional Planning Commission; Brent Rakowski, Vergennes Representative for the Transportation Advisory Committee of the Addison County Regional Planning Commission and Mayor Bill Benton. Shannon explained he invited Josh, Brent and Mayor Benton to the meeting as a result of several recent pedestrian close calls and the November 15th City Council meeting where the subject was discussed.

Shannon asked if anyone had comments or questions to help provide guidance to Brent regarding the Planning Commission's view to improve pedestrian safety or other transportation issues for Vergennes. Mike noted that a sidewalk extension on the west side of Main Street to the Otter Creek Basin as outlined in the Downtown- Basin Master Plan would help. He added that mid-block crosswalks seem to be a problem and asked if there were any viable ways to improve safety there. Mayor Benton responded he had investigated flashing crosswalk signs that should improve driver response to pedestrians. Josh added these signs were effective. Everyone agreed that some kind of crosswalk signalization should be pursued.

Mel asked about looking at the parking reconfiguration at the intersection of South Water Street and Macdonough Drive. He noted the intersection was the focus of a formal traffic study that was done over a decade ago. He added the current parking and traffic lanes seem to have made the intersection worse and wondered if diagonal parking on South Water Street would be better than the current pattern.

Mayor Benton stated he would like the City to develop a plan and budget for high-priority items and perhaps issue a bond through a city-wide vote to effect positive change sooner rather than later. Brent stated he's trying to determine the best paths to proceed and to uncover possible funding opportunities. Josh outlined several grant opportunities including Bike/Ped grants due in July, Safe Routes to School grants, and Transportation Alternatives grants due in October.

The discussion then moved to ways to reduce truck traffic on Main Street. Josh reported that Bridge #8 which crosses Otter Creek on Route 17 is in worse condition than originally thought and is on the State's "Fast Track" program for replacement. The replacement will likely result in a 60 day closure during the replacement which will mean all traffic will be re-routed from Route 17 through

Vergennes. Shannon then asked about the status of the bridge crossing Otter Creek on Route 22A in Vergennes. Josh responded it is the number one listed priority on the TAC's pre-candidate project list. This means that it is noted as being the county's top recommendation to the State for replacement/repair. He added that this will mean possible replacement in four to seven years.

Mel stated one of the primary obstacles from pursuing a Route 17 bypass was the condition of Bridge #8 and if the bridge was already scheduled for replacement, what are the issues/obstacles in the way. He added if you can let us know, we can address them. Josh responded there are letters from surrounding towns, including Addison and New Haven listing objections and this would be a good place to start. Josh also noted there was concern about the proximity of the railroad at the intersection of Route 7 and Route 17 in New Haven. Jason responded that the intersection is north of the railroad crossing and trucks turning from Route 17 onto Route 7 wouldn't cross the tracks. Additionally, existing traffic is already crossing the tracks on Route 7.

Brent stated his impression was the feeling on the TAC is that Vergennes hasn't followed through on earlier studies and recommendations and many members are not willing to consider a bypass proposal until Vergennes can demonstrate that it has taken steps in regard to traffic calming measures. Josh concurred. Mel responded Main Street is a Class 1 road and he thinks we need VTrans approval before making any changes to Main Street. Josh suggested being creative – for example possibly using Route 17 as an alternate route for medium-sized trucks which could more easily handle the road and have the larger trucks continue to use Route 22A.

As the discussion wrapped up, Josh said he would help facilitate dialog between Vergennes and County and State resources to develop consensus or agreement on the best path forward.

The minutes to the regular meeting of October 24, 2016 were reviewed. Cheryl moved to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by John with all voting in favor.

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. Mike moved that the Planning Commission Rules of Procedure be re-adopted. The motion was seconded by Tim with all voting in favor.

The Planning Commission reviewed proposed changes to the plan agreed upon in the September meeting in a version of the document with changes being tracked. John noted the formatting for some of the proposed amendments was different than the rest of the document. Shannon stated he would change the formatting to match. Morgan suggested changing "recommendations matrix" to "recommendation matrix" in several places within the proposed changes. Everyone agreed. On page 53 Cheryl suggested changing "In accord with" to "In accordance with". Mike asked about the data contained in the energy pie charts on page 54. He wondered if the energy use figures were calculated and applied to Vergennes based on state-wide experience or if they were based on actual usage for Vergennes. Shannon stated he had taken the graphs from the Vermont Community Energy Dashboard, but he wasn't certain of the data source or methodology for the graphs. Mike responded we want to know the methodology and properly site the source before including. Jason added we should include a legend to make the graphs easier to understand. Cheryl said having this kind of information in the plan is beneficial. John offered assistance in creating new graphs if necessary.

Shannon said he would have more information at the next meeting.

Next the Planning Commission discussed the timeline for the plan update. Shannon stated he still thought they were on track to have a deliverable product ready after December's regular meeting.

Next the Planning Commission heard items of interest updates:

Transportation items update – No update.

Education items update – No update.

Stormwater items update – No update.

Tree/Urban Forestry items update – No update.

Materials Management items update – Cheryl reported she, Mel and Teri Kuczynski, District Manager of Addison County Solid Waste Management District recently met to review changes and deadlines in Act 148 and their possible impact to the Vergennes program.

Jason reported that he attended a planning charrette on November 12, to explore potential future uses of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church. More information will be available as the project continues.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk