



Village of Manchester, Vermont

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission Held October 19th, 2022 at 11:00am

Members Present: Chair Rich Heilemann, Vice-Chair Audrey Kolloff, Anthony MacLaurin, Christie Bronstein, Renee Waller, Tom Scarnecchia, Eric Dorsch

Member(s) Absent:

Others Present: Zoning Administrative Officer Curan VanDerWielen, Kim Weiss-Lewit, President of the Board of Trustees Tom Deck, Matt Latham

The meeting was held both in person at the Village Office and via zoom.

Rich Heilemann called the meeting to order at 11:00am.

Minutes:

Approve the draft minutes of both the regular and special meetings of September 21st, 2022.

Audrey Kolloff motioned to approve the draft minutes for the regular meeting of September 21st 2022, noting one grammatical change to Page 5 of the document. Anthony MacLaurin seconded the motion. The Planning Commission (PC) then unanimously approved the draft minutes.

Planned Business:

Set Objectives for Current Term

Heilemann introduced the agenda item and asked about the status of the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG). Both Tom Deck and Curan VanDerWielen advised the PC that they were unsure about where exactly the Village was within the process and would follow up after the meeting.

Heilemann reviewed aloud several of the major items the PC had recently been discussing, including bicycle safety and infrastructure, parking regulations, the local and regional affordable housing crisis, and bylaw modernization. Heilemann then asked the Commissioners which items they wished to prioritize for the current term. MacLaurin suggested focusing on the creation of an Energy Sub-Committee, while Kolloff mentioned creating a memorandum for homeowners concerning the recently adopted Energy Chapter of the Plan of Development. Renee Waller, Tom Scarnecchia, and Heilemann agreed with Kolloff. Scarnecchia cautioned Commissioners that the intent of the letter should be taken into account when crafting its language, and then asked what the Commission sought to achieve overall by the letter. Heilemann stated that he believed the intent should be to encourage future solar development, appropriately. Heilemann asked Kolloff if she would be willing to draft the letter for review during the next regular meeting, in November. Kolloff affirmed that she would prepare a draft and invited input from other Commissioners during

that process. Eric Dorsch commented that a longer letter might deter homeowners from reading it, and then asked if the Board of Trustees would need to approve the letter before it was sent out. Kolloff stated that yes, the Board would need to approve the letter. Heilemann asked Deck if he thought the letter a good idea. Deck stated that he did and affirmed that the Board would need to approve the letter.

Heilemann then stated that he wished to discuss some of the general suggestions concerning the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) transportation study. Christie Bronstein asked VanDerWielen to provide a copy of the transportation study to Commissioners for the November meeting. MacLaurin commented that he believed the study did not take into account swells in traffic during peak tourism or hospitality seasons. Some general questions were then addressed from Kim Weiss-Lewit and MacLaurin about events and seasonal parking capacity. MacLaurin then asked about the prospect of integrating a bike lane along Route 7 to improve cycling accessibility. Heilemann stated that he had not heard from the BCRC in terms of a follow up on that item, however, that he understood additional studies and engineering design would need to be done before the feasibility of the proposal was understood. Heilemann then suggested that he would reach out again to Mark Anders at the BCRC for a follow up. VanDerWielen suggested speaking with Anders at the next Board of Trustees meeting, as he was scheduled to be present. Deck affirmed this. Heilemann stated that he would discuss with Anders at the next Board meeting.

Discuss Next Steps for Bylaw Modernization

Heilemann then introduced the next agenda item and stated that he wished to hold a general discussion on the matter, without getting into extensive detail. Heilemann then referred to the recently released affordable housing report prepared by BCRC and presented to the PC during their last regular meeting, by Cat Bryars. Heilemann stated that he wished to discuss the six suggestions for the Village made by the BCRC report and began with a general discussion on where mixed-use development could be encouraged.

Weiss-Lewit then asked a question about the purpose of the Business-2 district, and which parcels were included in it. VanDerWielen answered Weiss-Lewit's question. A general conversation about the Business districts, their purpose, and recent permitting ensued among the Commissioners and members of the public. MacLaurin then asked why Bryars had suggested encouraging mixed-use development in the Village Residential zoning district during the last regular meeting, and in the BCRC report. VanDerWielen responded that he believed it was likely due to the density of development and walkability of the area. Heilemann suggested that encouraging mixed-use residential-commercial development in the Village Residential and Mixed Residential zoning districts appeared tailored for other communities, such as Bennington. Heilemann stated that the Village was already a highly walkable community and had a hard time envisioning commercial development within those zones, given their current composition. Kolloff agreed with Heilemann and added that she believed commercial development in those zones could interrupt the character of the neighborhoods considerably. Deck offered that it appeared the Business-1 and Business-2 zones were more appropriate for such development and appeared to already include much of that

style of development at present. Weiss-Lewit stated that she was concerned about incorporating commercial development into neighborhoods as it could increase noise and traffic. VanDerWielen stated that it appeared that the most appropriate zones to incorporate mixed-use development were the Business-1, Business-2, Equinox Historic, and to a certain extent the Rural-Residential 2 zones. Deck stated that while he agreed the Village needed to encourage more affordable housing development, there may be unintended consequences for its character if placed inappropriately.

A general conversation about the appropriateness of certain locations for affordable housing ensued. Several questions were answered or discussed about the nature and definition of affordable housing, the need for more local amenities, Vermont statutory requirements or guidelines, the possibility of breaking out offices from retail spaces when setting new zoning, the renaming the Business zones as Mixed-Use zones, the use and definition of a Planned Unit Development (PUD), statutory changes concerning Accessible Dwelling Units (ADUs), and altering parking regulations to ease development restrictions. The discussion on parking regulations continued, with Kolloff stating that including a waiver in the Bylaws for certain mixed-use development was a good idea. MacLaurin and Heilemann agreed with Kolloff. Bronstein offered that encouraging more cycling activity in the area would alleviate traffic further and suggested requiring bike racks at new developments and encouraging further accessibility. VanDerWielen commented that both Kolloff and Bronstein's suggestions would have been helpful for recently permitted development projects, where parking became a point of contention. Deck stated that the creation of public parking would be difficult and had already been explored by the Board several years ago, with no results.

Scarnecchia then inquired about recent helicopter landings at the Orvis green and how it interacted with zoning to VanDerWielen. VanDerWielen described the question, research, and solution to the issue before stating that noise or safety complaints about helicopter traffic needed to be directed to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Review updated Section 10 Bylaw Edits

Heilemann introduced the next agenda item. VanDerWielen then presented an updated draft of Section 10 of the Village Zoning Bylaws, which included a recommendation to add a late fee clause to permitting and raising the estimated valuation cap relevant to minor permits to \$30,000.00. Some general questions about how this related to the current permitting system were asked by Commissioners and addressed by VanDerWielen. Scarnecchia motioned to approve the draft and MacLaurin seconded the motion. The PC then unanimously approved the Village Bylaw Section 10 draft.

Review progress on Manchester Short Term Rental study

Heilemann introduced the next agenda item. VanDerWielen stated that he had no major updates for the Commission but had reached out to Janet Hurley with the Town of Manchester for an update on the progress of the joint Short-Term Rental (STR) study. VanDerWielen reiterated several informational points on the STR market and the intent of the study, before asking if there

were any questions. Heilemann commented that he had been following developments at the state level regarding STRs and what appeared to be stalled progress overall.

Heilemann then reviewed key topics to be discussed during the next meeting, including more discussion on affordable housing, the transportation study, and other business as brought to the attention of the Commission.

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was closed at 12:10pm.

The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission will be held on November 16th, 2022, at 11:00am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Curan VanDerWielen, Zoning Administrative Officer

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