

TOWN OF STAMFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
March 7, 2022
(UNAPPROVED)

Planning Commission: Debra Burchard, Chair, Kurt Gamari, Aaron Malachuk, Carolyn Brooks, David Saldo, Jenifer Hughs, and Sheila Lawrence.

John Dupras, Daniel Potvin, and Jessica Tatro (alternate) were not present.

Visitors: Maura Hawkins, Marta Miller and Pamela Tworig.

Jim Sullivan, Bennington County Regional Commission.

Lori Shepard, Secretary.

Deb Burchard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

REORGANIZATION OF PLANNING COMMISSION

MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to nominate Deb Burchard as Chair. SECONDED by Sheila Lawrence. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Dave Saldo to nominate Sheila Lawrence as Vice Chair. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Deb Burchard to appoint Carolyn Brooks as Clerk. SECONDED by Dave Saldo. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Dave Saldo stated that for years there has been a conflict of interest with a voting member of the Planning Commission also being a voting Selectboard member. He explained that the law provides that the Selectboard can appoint one of its members to be an ad-hoc, non-voting, member of the Planning Commission. Jim Sullivan said he has spoken with the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) about this specifically and they said there is no inherent conflict of interest, and that people wear many hats in small towns. Jim Sullivan said there is nothing in statute and that VLCT would not support this point of view that it is a conflict of interest for a resident to serve on both the Planning Commission and the Selectboard. Pam Tworig stated that she was attending as a visitor but said she might be interested in being appointed an ad-hoc member. Dave Saldo said he would find the conflict of interest information and send it to the town office and Jim Sullivan directly.

MINUTES

Deb Burchard noted a spelling error in her title at the end of the minutes.

MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to accept the regular meeting minutes of January 3, 2022 as corrected. SECONDED by Deb Burchard. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

RESIGNATION

MOTION by Deb Burchard to accept the resignation of John Dupras from the Planning Commission with regret. SECONDED by Aaron Malachuk. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

LETTER OF INTEREST

Maura Hawkins submitted a letter of interest to be appointed to the Planning Commission to fill the vacancy. The letter will be presented to the Selectboard.

PLANNING COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

The Commission discussed the Selectboard's appointment of Jessica Tatro as alternate to the Planning Commission last week. The Commission felt they should receive a written request and the Planning

Commission should make a recommendation to the Selectboard. Jim Sullivan clarified that the Planning Commission makes a recommendation for the appointment of the Zoning Administrator only. The Selectboard is in charge of all appointments without any recommendation by the Planning Commission. MOTION by Carolyn Brooks to endorse Maura Hawkins for the open seat. SECONDED by Aaron Malachuk. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

Deb Burchard will attend the next Selectboard meeting to promote Maura Hawkins as an outstanding replacement of John Dupras.

GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST TRAILS

Aaron Malachuk would like to see the development of trails for hiking, mountain biking and cross country skiing on National Forest land. He spoke with the Head of the National Forest Recreation Department but she was unable to attend tonight. She suggested the Commission prepare and send her a list of questions. Pam Tworig was uneasy about beginning trail discussions with all of the ATV issues in town. Aaron Malachuk said even the fast-track permitting process will take over six months so he doesn't want to wait. Deb Burchard noted that whether it's ATV or ecotourism, the same issues of parking and increased traffic on roads exist. Jim Sullivan spoke of the Schedule of Proposed Actions which lists what projects the National Forest is considering. Jim Sullivan felt these trails would be less of a tourist magnet and more of an asset for the local community. Pros and cons were discussed along with electric bicycles.

BYLAW MODERNIZATION GRANT

Jim Sullivan brought several maps for the Commission's review. The first step is for the Commission to define the physical area of the new village district so that he can submit the application to the state. The village district must be small within the center of town. The state will not approve the designation if it is too large and the state will respond with what area it will allow. Along with deciding the physical area of the new village district, the Planning Commission will have to change the By-laws to allow for higher density housing and/or greater flexibility on how the land can be developed in the village center district. Various grants could be available to residents or businesses to make the village more vibrant, or to the town for a small septic system to support the increased growth. Pam Tworig thought the Planning Commission was just supposed to be studying this for a year, not implementing it. Jim Sullivan stated that this is a two part process, the first is choosing the location of the district, and the second is updating the zoning regulations. He noted that just designating a village center does not obligate the town to do anything. Pam Tworig recalled that when this was first brought up at a Selectboard meeting, many people did not support this project. She reviewed the wetlands map which Jim Sullivan provided and noted that the state is promoting the greatest development in a valley, and in a flood zone. The pros and cons of bringing in more housing and more families and its effect on our school and high school costs was also discussed. After reviewing the map, the Commission would like the village district to start at the state line and end at the bridge near Nichols Road. The Commission felt the school, fire department, churches and Billmont's Country Store should be included in the district. Jim Sullivan does not believe the state will approve a center that large but will try.

MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to adjourn. SECONDED by Deb Burchard. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on May 2, 2022.

Debra Burchard
Planning Commission Chair

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