

Townshend Planning Commission
Minutes
Minutes June 12, 2024

- Present:** John Evans, Bob DeSiervo, Liza Martin and Andrew Snelling
Mike McConnell from Windham Regional Commission (WRC)
- 1. Call to Order:** Chairman Evans called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.
 - 2. Additions and Deletions:** Snelling requested that a discussion of Open Meeting Law changes be added under new business. DeSiervo asked to add Town Hall Renovation and also Garage Generator under Old Business. There were no objections.
 - 3. Members of the Public:** Mike McConnell will speak regarding the Town Plan.
 - 4. Approval of Minutes:** DeSiervo moved, and Martin seconded a motion to approve the minutes for the May 22, 2024 meeting as submitted. The motion passed.
 - 5. Correspondence:** none
 - 6. Old Business:**

Town Plan: Snelling started with distributing copies of the current table of contents, and excerpts from state Planning Manual covering the twelve required elements of a town plan and fourteen state planning goals, that need to be addressed in a town plan. He requested that all Commissioners review the documents to better understand the process and purpose of a town plan. Mike McConnell handed out a copy of the budget and timeline for the project noting that the dates in timeline were no longer accurate. DeSiervo inquired about what in the current plan had been identified as needing updating. McConnell stated that he was still reviewing the plan, but that much of it can be reused with updates to dates and statistical information. He continued, saying the more significant changes will be providing for inclusion of a section on Forest Blocks and Wildlife Corridors and integrating an Act 174 compliant energy element in the document. Martin mentioned that much of the neighboring towns have used the material from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife website for the Act 171 section. Snelling said that he had heard that the resolution in the BioFinder maps had been updated and were very helpful in identifying wildlife road crossings. He went on to state that Townshend had significant amounts of conserved land and it would be useful if WRC could provide a map of conserved lands in Townshend. McConnell said that should be easily available.

McConnell said that Margo Ghia in their office would be reviewing the draft energy element next week and that Lisa Donnelly would be gathering together the census data and other information for the Community Assessment. He asked if it would be possible to start assigning chapters or topics to different people. Snelling volunteered to work on energy and Martin

volunteered to work on the Act 171 section. It was agreed to try and workout additional assignments at the next meeting.

There was a discussion of how to approach community involvement and outreach. McConnell suggesting waiting for a public information meeting until the community assessment was complete and a “redline” copy of the existing plan was prepared. He did suggest the Planning Commission schedule time to update that Select Board at various milestones in the project.

McConnell asked if it would be helpful to have him schedule to attend the first meeting of every month. The Commissioners agreed that would be a good tentative plan, but that it be subject to review going forward.

Town Hall: a) Snelling provided an update on the Village Trust Initiative (VTI) that the intake form had been submitted and he had been interviewed on the project. The VTI expect to narrow down the pool of applicants by the end of June followed by site visits in July

b) DeSiervo made the Commissioners aware that Kate Morrow is pursuing possible grants specifically for the Opera House windows. Evans said that he and Jim Crozier had temporarily secured a number of the windows to prevent them from being opened or falling out.

DeSiervo handed out some materials on safety and risk management during renovation of municipal buildings. He called attention to the need to have the proper insurance requirements for contractors and assuring that the site is safe for people working in the building during any construction.

c) DeSiervo reported that he hadn’t heard from the architect on the cost of preparing bid specs and RFP’s for the ramp, doors and bathroom projects. He will follow up with the architect.

MTAP Grant: Snelling informed the Commissioners that Townshend hadn’t been awarded the grant for a backup generator and fire alarm systems. DeSiervo said that he thought the generator was important and we should still pursue it despite not receiving the grant funds. He has the information from the different vendors and will compile it into a write up for the Select Board.

7. **New Business:**

Open Meeting law updates: Snelling made the Commissioners aware of changes made by the legislature to the open meeting laws. The Planning Commission will not be able to meet 100% remotely after July 1st. However, will need to provide a remote option if it is requested. It appears that planning commissions are advisory boards and will not be required to provide audio or video recordings of meetings.

8. **Meeting Schedule:**

Regular Meeting: June 26, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.

Regular Meeting: June 10, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.

Approved June 26, 2024

9. Adjournment:

DeSiervo made a motion, seconded by Martin to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 pm. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Snelling