

Townshend Planning Commission

Minutes

Minutes July 24, 2024

Present:

John Evans, Bob DeSiervo, Rick Matschke, Liza Martin and Andrew Snelling

Members of the public: Mike McConnell Windham Regional Commission (WRC)

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Evans called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
2. **Additions and Deletions:** none
3. **Members of the Public:** Mike McConnell will participate in the Town Plan discussion
4. **Approval of Minutes:** Matschke moved, and Evans seconded a motion to approve the minutes for the July 10, 2024 meeting as submitted. The motion passed.
5. **Correspondence:** NRB District 2 email on Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association permit: NRB response that permit application remains incomplete.
6. **Old Business:** Town Plan: Snelling asked Mike McConnell to address the Commission starting with how recent legislative changes might affect the Town Plan. He stated that there are a number of changes related to the regional commissions that will filter down to the town planning commissions after the regional commissions have acted on them. There are also changes to Village Center Designation (VCD) making them permanent without the need to renew. McConnell led the group through a discussion and review of the existing Planning Goals. The Commissioners generally were satisfied with the current goals but it was suggested that new goals for recreational/tourism and housing might be added.
There was a discussion about land use planning for affordable housing and what that might look like. The discussion touched on some of the recent Act 250 exemptions for affordable housing and whether any were applicable to Townshend.
McConnell inquired of the Commissioners what a review of the current town plan looked like to them. Various members responded. DeSiervo stated that the Commission was waiting on several items from WRC, including, item 1, review of existing plan and strategies for update; item 2, community assessment; updated energy data; and element 10, WRC recommended program for addressing low and moderate income. McConnell responded that he was part way through item 1, Lisa Donnelly was working on the community assessment and 2020 census data, and the energy data should be available in August.
Town Hall:
a) Preservation Trust of Vermont: Snelling informed the

Approved August 14, 2024

Commission that the PTV had declined to provide funding for the Phase 1 covering the first floor ADA improvements, but had committed \$5,000 to supporting planning for the Opera House floor work. He stated that it was unclear how to proceed in confirming the funds or how long the commitment was for.

b) Architectural plans and specs: The Commission discussed the value of obtaining bid plans, specification and RFP assistance from an architect with historical preservation experience, and that the current sole bid was higher than anticipated. Snelling made a motion, seconded by DeSiervo, to solicit additional quotes for bid drawings, plans, specification and RFP assistance from other architects. The motion was discussed and passed on a voice vote. Evans and DeSiervo each volunteered to reach out to other architects for quotes on providing the work.

7. New Business:

Legislative changes to Act 250: The Commissioners talked about the DHCD legislative Summary which had been distributed earlier. DeSiervo reported on the meeting with Sen. Wendy Harrison and specifically the 1/4 mile exemption zone for up to 50 housing units. Snelling questioned if it applied because Townshend didn't have a zoning bylaw. Matschke asked if Townshend would fall in tier 2 or tier 3. There was a discussion about the new tiers and also on necessary changes to the Flood Plan bylaw to include River Corridors. The Commissioners agreed that the new legislative language is unclear and it will take some time to sort out how it is actually going to be implemented.

8. Meeting Schedule:

Regular Meeting: August 7, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting: August 21, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.

9. Adjournment:

Martin moved and Matschke seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Snelling