

## **Planning Commission** *Town of Ferrisburgh, Vt.*

FINAL – Minutes for meeting of October 18, 2017; approved March 21, 2018

**Members present:** Bob Beach (chair), Gail Blasius, Arabella Holzapfel, Walter Reed, Bessie Sessions, Keith Wagner. **Absent:** Al Chamberlain, Anne Cohn, Mike Quinn.

### **Representatives of the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC)**

**present:** Ted Davis, Middlebury; Tim Davis, Ferrisburgh; James Dayton, Panton; Shannon Haggett, Vergennes; Ellen Kurrelmeyer, Whiting; Adam Lougee, ACRPC executive director; Andrew Manning, Bridport; Jim Pulver, Goshen. (Planning Commission member Arabella Holzapfel also represents Ferrisburgh on the ACRPC.)

**Town official present:** Bonnie Barnes, zoning administrator.

Bob Beach, chair, opened the meeting at 6:58 p.m. He said it was appropriate at this meeting about the new Ferrisburgh Town Plan that commission members again thank Arabella Holzapfel for her work in shepherding the plan through the approval process.

**Approval of minutes from September 20, 2017:** It was determined the board members present at the October meeting who had also attended the September meeting did not represent a quorum, so the board was not able to vote on the September minutes.

The board determined that it did have a quorum to vote on the minutes from the May 17, 2017, meeting, which Bonnie Barnes, zoning administrator, had told the board were not voted on previously. Gail Blasius made a motion to approve the minutes. Walter Reed seconded. All voted in favor. **Motion approved.**

**7:05 p.m. ACRPC review of the Ferrisburgh Town Plan.** A hearing by the ACRPC's local government committee to determine whether the committee should recommend that the full ACRPC board approve the plan.

Ted Davis, chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. He let the Planning Commission know that having the town plan approved by the ACRPC was not mandatory but was recommended. He said having the plan approved by the regional planning group would allow the town to apply for state and federal grants requiring regional approval. He also pointed out the importance of consistency among the town plans in the county.

He said the local government committee had received a review of the Ferrisburgh plan done by the ACRPC staff, which said the plan met all requirements under state law. Staff and ACRPC members did have a few questions, and Ted Davis said they would go over some of those before taking a vote on whether to recommend that the full ACRPC board approve the plan.

He asked Planning Commission members to describe the process they went through. Walter Reed said the process had included numerous meetings with other town boards and committees, and with townspeople generally. Arabella Holzapfel said a survey had been

sent out to gauge public opinion on planning issues, which had generated a good response, with about 30 percent of those contacted responding. She said that in the surveys, meetings with town officials and the public sessions the town had found out about issues of concern, and revamped the plan, then gotten more public comment, and so on. Bob Beach said the previous plan had not been perceived by some as taking public opinion into account, so it was important that the commission be as transparent and open as possible in developing the new plan. He said commission members had specifically reached out to opponents of two recent developments in town, the COCO truck stop/McDonald's and the Dollar General store, to make sure their views were heard. He said the process had been a lengthy one, beginning back in 2009.

Arabella Holzapfel described work sessions with the selectboard, the Energy Committee, the Conservation Commission and other groups in town, all of which had been open to the public. She also noted the Claire Tebbs, ACRPC land use planner, had been a great help to the town as it developed the new plan.

Gail Blasius thanked the ACRPC for the report it had generated and sent to the Planning Commission, and said she was interested to hear about the possibility of funding to pay for work on updating the energy section of the plan.

Adam Lougee, executive director of ACRPC, presented some questions about the plan. He wondered whether the town was interested in having a section of town designated as a village center, saying that there were benefits, such as relief from some Act 250 requirements. He said there were, indeed, funding possibilities for working on improving the energy section of the plan. He said a few things needed to be done to the Ferrisburgh plan if the Public Utility Commission, the state agency that approves solar, wind and other power projects, is to give the town's rulings on such projects "substantial deference," rather than just "due consideration," the latter being what the town would receive under the plan as currently constituted.

Lougee also said the ACRPC wondered whether the town would consider roundabouts for managing traffic on the Route 7 corridor, including perhaps at the Stage Road/Old Hollow Road intersection. He said such roundabouts could define edges for a designated village center.

Arabella Holzapfel asked whether changing the energy portion of the plan would mean that the entire plan needed to be reconsidered. Lougee said the town could revamp the energy portion of the plan and hold public hearings just on that.

Tim Davis, Ferrisburgh representative to the ACRPC, asked about traffic maps in the plan that don't appear to reflect a number of serious traffic accidents on the Route 7 corridor. The maps were provided by the Vermont Agency of Transportation, via the ACRPC, but it was not clear why some accidents were not included.

Shannon Haggett, Vergennes representative, said pursuing a village center designation was strongly recommended. James Dayton, Panton representative, suggested that the town do

more to encourage use of the park and ride at the corner of Route 7 and Route 22, and of Addison County Transit resources.

Ted Davis asked about the requirement in the plan for a conditional use permit for large solar arrays, wondering whether that agreed with state law. Keith Wagner said the requirement reflected a desire for the town to have some input on siting and screening. Bob Beach said developers had begun to come to the Planning Commission to seek at least verbal approval before going to the state's Public Utilities Commission.

Arabella Holzapfel said it was important to recognize that Bob McNary, the longtime head of the Ferrisburgh Energy Committee who passed away last year, had been instrumental in developing the energy section of the town plan.

Tim Davis suggested the town develop an inventory of unused and/or dilapidated housing in the town, especially on the Route 7 corridor. He said there is a need for elderly housing, as well as affordable housing for young people who want to move to the town, and it would be good to know what property might be available for reuse or new development. Bob Beach said there is no money in the Planning Commission budget to develop such an inventory, and said it was a question that might best be addressed to the selectboard. He pointed out the selectboard had dealt with the issue of the burned out building on Route 7.

Adam Lougee asked the commission members what they thought ACRPC might be able to do for Ferrisburgh. Bob Beach said the most pressing need was support for the effort to revise the town's zoning bylaws, so they align with the new town plan. He said Arabella Holzapfel was leading the effort. She said she was at the stage of developing plans for how to make it happen. Lougee said a municipal planning grant might be the best bet, but that it would probably be at least year away. He said the zoning revisions are in many ways even more technical than the plan, and can take a lot of time and money.

Lougee asked again whether there was any support for a village center designation, and commission members said the selectboard had not been in favor of the idea, but that it might be possible to revisit it, if there were funding opportunities or other benefits.

Shannon Haggett made a motion that the local government committee recommend approval of the plan to the full ACRPC board. Ellen Kurrelmeyer seconded. All voted in favor. **Motion approved.**

Shannon Haggett made a motion to close the committee hearing at 7:50 p.m. Tim Davis seconded. All voted in favor. **Motion approved.**

### **Other Business**

Walter Reed asked again about a solar installation on the Vorsteveld property at the intersection of Basin Harbor Road and Button Bay Road, following up on questions he had raised at the August meeting. The installation had been approved with conditions, including planting of trees to screen the solar array. He said that corn on the property had been cut, but no trees had been planted. Board members asked Bonnie Barnes, zoning

administrator, to write a letter to the property owners, reminding them about this condition of the solar array's approval. Barnes said she would draft a letter and send it to Bob Beach, chair, for his approval.

### **Adjournment**

Keith Wagner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m. Arabella Holzapfel seconded. All voted in favor. **Motion approved.**

— Respectfully submitted,

Tim Etchells