

Planning Commission
Town of Ferrisburgh, VT

Minutes for meeting of January 20, 2021

Note: This meeting was conducted remotely. All participants joined the meeting through a Zoom online meeting.

Members present: Bob Beach, Jr. (Chair), Walter Reed II, Gail Blasius, Anne Cohn, Kristin DeBellis, Arabella Holzapfel, Michael Quinn, **Members absent:** Bessie Sessions, Al Chamberlain

Town official present: Bonnie Barnes, Zoning Administrator, Robyn King, Minute Taker

Participants present: Katie Raycroft-Meyer, Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Bob Beach called the meeting to order at 7:11 pm

Municipal Planning Grant: Visualizing Density Update

Arabella Holzapfel introduced Katie Raycroft-Meyer from the Addison County Regional Planning Commission who was present to give a presentation on the municipal planning grant from 2019 and mentioned that the deadline for the grant was September of 2021. Katie Raycroft-Meyer gave a brief background on the project and noted that the steering group/committee had made a decision to put things on hold for a while due to COVID-19 and concerns around the ability to engage with the public.

Katie Raycroft-Meyer shared a powerpoint presentation and discussed the direction of the effort, which focused on looking at what denser areas might look like in clusters in the Town of Ferrisburgh. Katie Raycroft-Meyer explained that the grant looked at a few distinct areas of Town including the Intersection of Route 7 and 22A, the intersection of Route 7 and Monkton Road, Ferrisburgh Center where the Town Offices are located, and North Ferrisburgh at the intersection with the Post Office and the Jolley.

Katie Raycroft-Meyer noted that the group looked at soils, zoning, and conceptual scenarios of how infill might happen and presented to the Planning Commission the analysis of land use in these areas and concepts around what infill might look like. Common themes among the four locations included lack of public sewage treatment, walkability, and re-use of historic buildings. Katie Raycroft-Meyer noted that distinctions amongst the sites included the soils being slightly better in North Ferrisburgh and that the area would be a clean slate with opportunity for a greenway or elder housing that is affordable, and that in the Town Center, the historic buildings could be used as a pattern for development. Katie Raycroft-Meyer explained that the two sites in Vergennes offered great opportunities for redevelopment, but that due to the challenges of working amongst municipalities, there was a consensus in the steering group that it may be

more appropriate to focus on Ferrisburgh Center if that is what the community would like to do and welcomed thoughts on further public engagement.

Walter Reed II noted that years ago, the Planning Commission designed a roadway that was approved by the landowner near Cookie love that would have been an access road, but it never came to fruition and it would have been a great opportunity to alleviate some of the traffic in the intersection. Walter Reed II noted that new development in that area had a goal of being modeled after Dorset Street where buildings are closer to the road with parking behind the buildings, and Katie Raycroft-Meyer noted this is a common standard in planning, but sometimes a challenge to implement.

Kristen DeBellis noted that she had recalled that the North Ferrisburgh cluster was challenging to look at due to water access and state plans for walkways and that the group thought it may be good to focus on the areas nearer to 22A and Route 7 but that it may be difficult to host discussions with Vergennes. Katie Raycroft-Meyer noted that she believes Kristen was correct and that while the sites near Vergennes have a lot of opportunity, there is an understanding that things may be on hold in terms of collaboration amongst municipalities. There was discussion on specific parcels of land in that area, and potential development pathways.

Bob Beach asked what the next steps were on the process, and Katie Raycroft-Meyer noted that it was important to tease out the public engagement process, and decide on the focus so that there could be drawing and development to potentially seek a follow-up grant for after the initial concept. Bob Beach asked what the metrics were for affordable housing, and Katie Raycroft-Meyer answered that it's when residents can spend 30% or less on housing-related expenses such as rent and utilities and that at the current state, this is a local challenge as folks are spending more on housing due to raising house and land prices.

There was discussion of the public engagement process, with Arabella noting that the presentation was meant to be an update of where things are and to help focus the effort so that the September deadlines could be met. It was agreed that a subgroup should meet prior to Town Meeting day to more clearly sketch out the public engagement process for after Town Meeting Day as the zoning regulations would be considered at Town Meeting Day. After discussion of the merits of each cluster presented, there was consensus that while all sites had their own opportunities, Ferrisburgh Center was a good fit due to the alignment with the goal of the grant on infill development, the available recreational land that the Town owns, Safe Routes to School Plans, and recent development activities.

Gail Blasius made a motion that the focus of the grant be at the Center of Town, where the Town Hall, Memorial Hall, and Ferrisburgh Central School is located which was seconded by Arabella Holzapfel and the motion passed unanimously.

Arabella Holzapfel asked who wanted to be involved in the subgroup moving discussions on public engagement forward other than Kristen DeBellis who already offered and it was agreed

that it would be good to include someone from the Union Meeting House Committee, and someone who is developing in that area.

Other Business

Bob Beach noted that in the Izzo-Boardman/Calfee matter, there had been developments as both the fence application and the garage application had ended up in environmental court and that the lawyers on the Calfee side and on the Town side had come to an agreement that if a fence were built at 6 feet with two-feet of lattice, that would satisfy both parties. Bonnie Barnes noted that these were two separate matters in the courts, and that in settlement talks, the idea of a 6 foot opaque fence with 2 foot lattice would satisfy concerns over the lake view and that this would settle the matter between the Planning Commission and Mr. Calfee.

Walter Reed II clarified that this matter came to the Planning Commission due to the applicant putting up a fence without a permit, and also that the neighbors had withdrawn their opposition. Walter Reed II asked if instead of 6 opaque feet and 2 feet of lattice, if four feet of opaque fence and 4 feet of lattice would be acceptable, which Bonnie Barnes noted that she was unsure of. Bob Beach noted that he would be in favor of it, if this helps resolve the dispute amongst the neighbors, and Walter Reed II noted he had no issue with that and wanted to ensure that this wasn't precedent-setting, but also that he would be supportive if the Boardman-Izzos had no issue. Bonnie Barnes clarified that the Boardman-Izzos have opted out, and that this took place before the Planning Commission's decision and that under these circumstances they would not be able to follow-up with formal legal action.

Arabella Holzapfel asked about the garage matter, and Bonnie Barnes noted that the Town was not involved with this matter and noted that this came in front of the Zoning Board of Adjustment due to the garage not being built to the permitted specifications. After discussion of the garage and the original fence application, Walter Reed II confirmed that this would be 16 feet of fence on the lakeside. Bonnie Barnes confirmed with the Commission Members that next steps would include her reaching out to the neighbors to ensure they are comfortable with the 6 foot opaque fence with 2 foot lattice, knowing that a further compromise could be a 4 foot opaque fence with a four foot lattice and all were in agreement. Bonnie Barnes further noted that if the neighbors were in agreement with this solution, she would then notify the Town attorney about the neighbor and Commission support.

Approval of the December 2020 Meeting Minutes

Gail Blasius made a motion to accept the December 2020 meeting minutes, which was seconded by Mike Quinn and the motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Mike Quinn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 pm, which was seconded by Walter Reed II and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Robyn King.

