

**Planning Commission**  
*Town of Ferrisburgh, VT*

DRAFT - Minutes for meeting of November 18, 2020

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

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

**Town officials present:** Bonnie Barnes, Zoning Administrator; Robyn King, Minute Taker

**Participants present:** Karen Petterson (Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission), Jean Richardson

**ZONING UPDATE DISCUSSION**

Walter Reed called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and noted that there may not be enough members present to approve the previous meeting minutes from August, September, and October. Arabella Holzapfel, by invitation of Walter, noted that the Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission had met to discuss a particular change in the zoning map around Shellhouse Mountain which included a medium-sized extension. Jean Richardson presented the map on the screen and pointed to the area being discussed by the Conservation Commission.

Karen Petterson explained that the map was in alignment with a priority conservation block which presents opportunities for linking in the future. Jean Richardson noted that on the Town Map the present proposed line, which goes up to Robinson Road, is clearly aligned with the significant habitat map, which is helpful when reviewing and Karen Petterson confirmed that she compared the Town Map with information on biofinder and could see that it's a habitat block. Anne Cohn noted that there is a good level of biodiversity in that area. Karen Petterson noted there is additional information on what habitat blocks are and how they relate to Act 171. Arabella Holzapfel quoted an email from the Conservation Commission in explaining Act 171 which relates to forest blocks, habitat connectors, limiting fragmentation, and preserving wetlands and riparian areas.

Jean Richardson asked if the Planning Commission would like to make the changes to the Shellhouse Mountain district, and there was discussion of wanting to carefully review the impacts on landowners. After looking at individual parcels, there was consensus that it may not have a significant impact, given the understanding of how the landowners had intended to use their properties from past interactions. Walter Reed suggested that the Town communicate with the landowners affected to better understand intentions of use so that any conversion of property can be more clearly understood, and it was noted that there has already been some of

this exchange. There was further discussion of migration patterns across Route 7 near the Rokeby property and significant boundary lines.

Bonnie Barnes asked the Commission Members if they would like her to identify potential landowners who may be affected, which was confirmed by the Commission Members. There was further discussion on which parcels were displayed on the map that may be affected, and a consensus that it was the tax map that was used as a base layer, which is the reason behind newer subdivision lines not being displayed. Bonnie Barnes asked the Commission if they would like to have the conservation zone altered so that it matches the Town Plan, and if so, noted that it would be a courtesy to notify those affected, and explain how the change would or would not impact them.

Walter Reed asked if one of the landowners had more than 25 acres, which Bonnie Barnes noted that she could confirm. Walter Reed explained that there was one property that seemed that it would primarily be affected, and given that that property seemed to have over 25 acres, the impact should be minimal. Walter Reed went on to note that the other parcels affected only had slight modifications which shouldn't impact future plans and that his suggestion was that the Planning Commission and Conservation Commission come to an agreement prior to approaching landowners to let them know about the proposal and also to reinforce that the modifications are not restrictive. Anne Cohn noted that there's a strong chance that the landowners may have a very positive reaction.

Bonnie Barnes suggested that a letter be drafted to the landowners and that the letter could be circulated among the Board before being sent out. Jean Richardson suggested that a map be included with the letters. Mike Quinn suggested that an overlay be sent as well and Jean Richardson explained that at a minimum the proposed zoning, present map and proposed language could all be included so that there's a better understanding of encouragement of home businesses.

Arabella Holzapfel asked if the verbiage describing the habitat blocks should be included in the proposed zoning language, and Anne Cohn suggested that there be a link included in the zoning language so that people can read the longer description if interested. There being no further questions, Arabella Holzapfel made a motion that the Planning Commission move the boundaries of the Conservation 25 zone on Shellhouse Mountain to agree with those boundaries that are in the Planning Areas Map of the Town Plan and that Bonnie Barnes draft a letter to the affected landowners that explains the change in the boundaries, why they are proposing this, and asking for feedback.

Walter Reed noted that he was unsure if anyone would be affected by the proposed changes, given that the parcels meet the 25 acre threshold. Walter Reed went on to explain that the changes were simply adding a little to the district, would not be restrictive, and would provide benefit to the landowners as well as wildlife. Kristin DeBellis noted that explicitly asking for feedback would be redundant and possibly extend the process further, as landowners can be present to vote on the matter.

After discussion on the benefits to landowners and the opportunities to participate in the process, Anne Cohn seconded the motion made by Arabella Holzapfel, but amended the motion to remove the requirement about soliciting a response from landowners. **The motion passed unanimously.** Bonnie Barnes reiterated the motion, and noted that she would be able to get the names of the landowners as well as their accurate addresses to send the letter out.

Jean Richardson discussed other modifications proposed to the zoning language which included editorial items, technical language on wetland erosion, and suggestions for improving language around fire protection. Jean Richardson noted that the fire suppression language would be added, although this is more of a Town matter. Jean Richardson went on to explain that one of the omissions from the current draft was the density provisions and uses in each of the sections, which was pointed out by a Town resident, and the omission is a result of the visioning currently in process with the Subcommittee on density. Jean Richardson urged the Planning Commission to put the minimum acreage back in for dwelling units and primary uses as this creates a loophole. Walter Reed noted that he agreed with this move as did others. Jean Richardson noted that there were no other substantive comments raised and that she urged the Planning Commission to get the formal process started.

Walter Reed noted that he was aware that there would be a lengthy timetable involved with the formal process, and Jean Richardson noted that she was ready to start building it out, and that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns had confirmed that they can use Zoom for public participation legally as the process dictates. Walter Reed noted that he was confident that all would have an opportunity to participate, despite the pandemic. Jean Richardson committed to building out the timetable and reviewed key steps of the process and noted that she anticipates wrapping up before March. Walter Reed noted that he was positive about the process and residents contributing to the conversation and asked if anyone had any questions.

Karen Petterson inquired about the zoning map, and it was explained that it was not yet on the website and that the last piece before finalization was the Shellhouse Mountain Conservation Zone. Karen Petterson inquired about additional changes in terms of conservation areas, and it was mentioned that those would be considered further in the next year. Arabella Holzapfel noted that the density visualizations would need to be completed by next September, and that there would be another vote on that in the winter time of next year. Walter Reed noted his appreciation for Karen's suggestion as it was important to consider conservation linkages.

Kristin DeBellis noted that she would expect that traditional outreach methods may have to go further given the pandemic and suggested Facebook or Front Porch Forum. Jean Richardson explained her personal outreach efforts and noted this would continue. Karen Petterson asked a clarifying question about the Shoreland District and Industrial Zone and Arabella Holzapfel confirmed that those changes were decided against, and Jean Richardson confirmed that in the Industrial Zone it was a matter of not making alterations that would be considered as spot zoning.

Mike Quinn noted that in the future, for conservation areas, the Town may want to consider incentivizing conservation by allowing development rights elsewhere on properties, such as higher densities in developable areas. There was discussion of whether or not this could be done during density visioning and how this may interact with Planned Unit Development regulations. Mike Quinn noted that there may be ways to modify language to ensure landowners saw a benefit of preserving large tracts of land and connecting habitat areas. Walter Reed noted that it was a great discussion.

Walter Reed noted there was quorum to approve the September Meeting Minutes. **Arabella made a motion to approve the September minutes, which was seconded by Kristin and the motion passed unanimously.**

There being no further business, Arabella Holzapfel made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Anne Cohn and the meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm.