

Minutes

Approved on: July 20, 2022

Planning Commission
Town of Ferrisburgh, VT

Minutes for meeting of June 15, 2022

Note: This meeting was conducted both in person and remotely. Some participants joined the meeting through a Zoom online connection, while others attended in person.

Members present: Bob Beach (chair), Bessie Sessions, Anne Cohn, Walter Reed, Gail Blasius, Arabella Holzapfel (via Zoom), Kristin DeBellis (via Zoom), Jean Richardson.

Members absent: Michael Quinn.

Minute Taker: Anne Audy

Town officials present: Steven True (Zoning Administrator), Bonnie Barnes (PUD Administrator), Red Muir (Selectboard and Building Maintenance Committee).

Participants present (in person): None

Participants present (via Zoom): None

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by Bob Beach.

Minutes approval from May 18, 2022, meeting:

Jean Richardson offered suggested language and phrasing corrections for clarification and congruency as follows:

Page 4: "jurisdiction of opinion" should be changed to "jurisdictional opinion."

Page 4: Application #22-049 decision should be recorded as "preliminary plat," not a "sketch plan."

Page 8: Remove the following non-pertinent sentence as it causes confusion: "Michael Quinn addressed an e-mail narrative that was received in 2018, recently sent."

Page 9: Remove "though they are cultivators" and replace with "Places where cannabis is cultivated or processed or sold are called 'Cannabis Establishments.'"

Arabella Holzapfel noted on page 6, end of 2nd paragraph and beginning of 3rd paragraph, it should state only that there "are" wetlands on the property. Remove language stating that there are "not" wetlands.

Gail Blasius motioned to approve the minutes from the meeting of May 18, 2022, as amended; seconded by Anne Cohn; Kristin DeBellis abstained, all other members were in favor; **minutes from the meeting of May 18, 2018 are approved as amended.**

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Selectboard member Red Muir addressed Planning Commission regarding Town Center Safety

(7:03 pm)

Red Muir was present to address Town Center Safety. The Building Maintenance Committee has been working with the Friends of the Union Meeting Hall; for events and Ferrisburgh Day of last year, the traffic and parking is not sufficient. Existing old sheds were torn down to make more parking at the Union Meeting Hall. There is more parking at Pizzagalli's (BC Motorsports), the Historical Society and Ferrisburgh Central School. People are crossing the road where the light is or by Gilfeather's to reach the lawn of Union Meeting Hall.

In a Building Maintenance Committee Meeting, Jean Richardson suggested a letter be sent to Diane Lanpher with concerns about the light crossing and to request a crosswalk over Route 7 and across Middlebrook Road also.

In response, Diane Lanpher suggested that they start off going through the Ferrisburgh Planning Commission and Regional Planning to share our concerns. Being that we already have a light here, our concerns are to see if we can get crosswalk things in or see what should happen to get the ball rolling. It was suggested that a request should come from the Ferrisburgh Planning Commission and go to Regional Planning and Vermont Department of Transportation and include Diane Lanpher.

Jean Richardson stated that this is the route that was taken to get the light and crosswalk installed in North Ferrisburgh at Old Hollow Road and Route 7.

Gail Blasius recalled that this idea was brought up during the aforementioned project, of getting a crosswalk across Middlebrook Road and Route 7 because students were using the Union Meeting Hall for maple sugaring and more. It is in the Planning Commission minutes from back then.

Anne Cohn stated that a crosswalk and sidewalk were in the design during this conversation. She noted that "Safe Routes to School" has it planned out in their document.

Red Muir also shared the concern brought up by Jessica James, Selectboard Member, that the traffic light by Union Meeting Hall does not have fire department capability, while the light at Old Hollow Road does have it. Gail Blasius clarified that this "capability" is referring to the emergency vehicles having a button to push which stops traffic by turning the light red in all directions. Walter Reed pointed out that the light in North Ferrisburgh is in the Ferrisburgh Fire Department District; the light by the Union Meeting Hall is in the

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Vergennes Fire Department District. Discussion followed on whether the current lights can incorporate a sensor in the traffic lights.

Red Muir suggested that a crosswalk over Middlebrook Road at least have flashers for when a pedestrian is in the crosswalk, if it is not able to incorporate the push button crosswalk. The flashers do not, however, seem appropriate for Route 7. The speed limit through there is also 40 mph, and a decrease of at least 5 mph in that area would be a benefit. Many town centers in Vermont go down to 25 mph. Gail Blasius commented on the light cycle timing and difficulty turning right on red onto Route 7.

Red Muir stated that he will put on a Selectboard Meeting Agenda that requests for crosswalks, timed and/or flashing crosswalk lights, and a speed limit reduction were addressed with the Planning Commission. Walter Reed asked for clarification.

Red Muir stated that there is power, likely 110, at the lights already, so they just need to dig underground and pick up power for a timer system. Ideally the request is for a push button system to trigger a walk signal. It may not be feasible to put a post on Pizzagalli's corner of the intersection, so the crosswalk over Middlebrook Road may require flashing lights. Jean Richardson added that the painted crosswalks are also being requested across Route 7 and Middlebrook Road.

Bob Beach recalled that what was written in 2012 was quite persuasive. He asked if the Planning Commission is being asked to draft something. Red Muir reiterated that an initial letter has already been sent to Diane Lanpher. Jean Richardson offered to start a draft letter to send around to the Planning Commission members. Red Muir suggested including the school board and school district, to reinforce the request. Jean Richardson addressed Anne Cohn about also attaching the "Safe Routes to School" document, which is available online.

Bob Beach asked if there is state funding for the Union Meeting Hall. Jean Richardson confirmed there is a cultural facilities grant; there is also federal funding. Bob Beach suggested adding those in for possible funding sources as the Union Meeting Hall is being used for more public events. Anne Cohn pointed out that it is important to have slower traffic as part of the village center concept. Red Muir added that at the Building Maintenance Committee meeting, he can ask the Friends of the Union Meeting Hall to send a letter to Vermont Department of Transportation and Regional Planning as well, addressing their concerns with having students come over from Ferrisburgh Central School and increased pedestrian traffic due to fundraising events. Anne Cohn also recommended posting on Front Porch Forum.

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Gail Blasius asked if someone should make a motion that this committee write a letter supporting a crosswalk and a light. Red Muir suggested that the motion ask for an action item from the Vermont Department of Transportation instead of just a letter of support.

Jean Richardson clarified that the motion should request that the Vermont Department of Transportation put a crosswalk and the appropriate lights to at least cross Route 7 from Little Chicago Road to Middlebrook Road. Kristin DeBellis added in the suggestion of decreasing the speed limit in the area. Red Muir said that is something to be brought up in the Town Center Committee Meeting. Jean Richardson said the request could be phrased with the language of “such as,” including crosswalk, a light that reacts to the Fire Department, reduction in speed limit, etc. Red Muir suggested having someone from one of the Ferrisburgh committees attend a VTRANS meeting. Jean Richardson pointed out that most of the Vermont Department of Transportation communication is via email.

Jean Richardson asked if the Planning Commission should send a letter straight to the Vermont Department of Transportation with a copy to Regional Planning. Discussion followed on whether the entire intersection or only the crossing of a state highway would fall under the state’s jurisdiction. Red Muir suggested that if the Vermont Department of Transportation will only install a crosswalk across Route 7, Ferrisburgh may have to go to the Selectboard and Building Maintenance committee to purchase the solar-powered flashing light crosswalk.

Red Muir noted also that a decrease in speed limit to 35 mph is very reasonable for the area in question. Kristin DeBellis commented that there is potential for traffic issues in the McDonald’s area if people are going too fast on Route 7.

Gail Blasius made the following motion: A letter will be sent from the Planning Commission to Vermont Department of Transportation, including also Regional Planning, Diane Lanpher, and the Ferrisburgh Selectboard. The letter should request a painted crosswalk from Little Chicago Road to Middlebrook Road with timed lights, a flashing crosswalk from Pizzagalli to Union Meeting Hall, a decreased speed limit from 40 to 35, and a fire department light trigger.

Jean Richardson seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Gail Blasius inquired what the speed limit is in front of the school. Members noted that it is 35 mph. Red Muir suggested that the speed limit on Route 7 should continue to be 35 to Satterly Road.

Arabella Holzapfel noted that applying for the state designation of Ferrisburgh’s Village Center has been brought up and is in the town plan, though in the past the state has not

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wanted to give that designation when there is a US highway going through the middle of a town. I think a Village Center Designation would have a lot of benefits and we may want to do that in tandem with the pedestrian traffic requests. Kristin DeBellis recalled that the newer grants coming out this year are being reviewed for this criterion to ensure they could expand if necessary. Walter Reed addressed his concern over combining the requests causing one request to slow down the other one. He suggested setting out for the crosswalk first, then the Village Center Designation second, to avoid holding up the crosswalk.

Anne Cohn noted that the recreational area where the basketball court/ice rink is located, acts like the anchor, this should be considered in establishing a village center.

Application #22-045 for preliminary plat review for a four (4) lot subdivision; Toppers Crossing (vacant land); applicant(s): Roger Parker; Rural Agricultural (RA-5) district; tax map id no. 15/01/64

Application incomplete. Not addressed at this meeting.

Gail Blasius made a motion at 7:26 pm to go into deliberative session, including Bonnie Barnes; Jean Richardson seconded; all were in favor.

The Public Meeting was closed at 7:27 pm.

The Planning Commission came out of deliberative session on Application #21-167 at 7:35 pm. Gail Blasius made a motion to approve the sketch plan and allow the applicant to proceed to preliminary plat and site plan review according to its June 15, 2022, written findings and conclusions document, which is a public record, available at the town office. Anne Cohn seconded; **motion passed unanimously.**

Application #21-167 Sketch plan approved on June 15, 2022.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for July 20, 2022.