

ROCKINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION 2/01/2024 Meeting Minutes

PC Present: Chair, Deborah Wright; Jana Bryan, John Dunbar, Jim Mullen, Taylor Pichette, Guy Payne; Staff Gary Fox, Absent: Dalila Hall Zoom: Planning Administrator, Halle

1. Call Meeting to Order -Wright called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.
2. Public Comment for items not on the agenda -None were taken
3. Approval of January 18, 2024, minutes. Payne moved to adopt the minutes as written, Dunbar seconded, motion carried.
4. Town Plan- Process, Policy Changes, Timeline- Fox reviewed the timeline, in which the PC writes a resolution to approve Plan (Goal date on Feb. 29) and sends it to a public hearing. 30 days prior to a public hearing, a notice is sent to WRC, ACCD and neighboring Towns. Advertisements must be published in local newspapers 15 days prior to a public meeting.

At the Commission's public hearing, comments can be made. PC discusses and makes any relevant changes. If changes are made, they must schedule a PC meeting to adopt the changes at a later warned public meeting. If the PC makes no changes, they send the warning to the Select Board for the first of 2 public meetings, to be held not less than 30 days and not more than 120 days.

Selectboard Public Hearing must be warned 15 days before the first board meeting. If the Select Board does not make changes, the second public hearing will be held. If changes were made, the required 30 days and 15-day notice for the second hearing is required. Fox suggested they schedule Selectboard meetings as if they would make changes... For example, May and June and warn both.

Once Selectboard holds their 2nd hearing, they will close the hearing and adopt the Town Plan at a separate Selectboard meeting that does not require 15 day warned public meeting. Once adopted, it is the new Town Plan. PC will request WRC to adopt. The board agreed to hold the public meeting in the Lower Theatre on a Thursday and discussed how to increase attendance. A suggestion was made to advertise at the BFOH.

Scheduled for the 2/15 Meeting: 2 sections to finalize included Maps, overall Plan and suggested changes on Land Use and Energy Chapters.

Land Use Chapter updates-addition of narrative to the Chapter referring to the fact that half of the lots in Bellows Falls are non-conforming. EX. Of R-1 /1-acre lot zoning district on Atcherson Hollow which states it should be AF/25 acre lots. RMH Historic District to SR District along Rockingham Hill Rd. is R-1, it could be updated on one side to R-5 with AF on the backend and keep the cluster of single-family dwellings on 1 acre lots as R-1.

PG. 4 at bottom of Land Use Plan -flexibility in lot shapes and sizes **and frontage requirements**

PG. 7 Add these paragraphs:

Existing land use regulations in the Town's rural areas are based solely on rigid mathematical models (for ex. Minimum lot acreage, frontage, width, depth, and driveway requirements.) These rigid mathematical models result in the destruction and fragmentation of the towns natural resources and rural character. These regulations should evolve toward flexible, performance-based regulations that preserve natural resources and rural character. For ex. Encourage, not discourage, the shared use of curb cuts, private driveways, and utility lines. Agreed from last meeting.

In the Towns' urban area, existing dimensional requirements results in many lots being classified as "non-conforming lots", as nearly half of all lots in Bellows Falls. Revise the zoning bylaw's dimensional requirements so that these lots will "better meet the existing built environment"

Town Plan speaks aspirational, Language consistency is key.

Add 3 paragraphs regarding cell towers: FROM JIM Remove after Town Plan **the ordinance**

PG.8 second paragraph: These lands are sometimes zoned appropriately but some...zoning districts extending deep into these Forest Blocks. Fragment these forests and reduce habitat quality. Further subdivision of remove land these Forest Blocks into 1-acre lots...

Land Use Regulation and easement are remove the only tools.

Add to Bylaws energy code and permanent foundations for "any structure". PG 12 Suggestions speak to Bylaws.

MAP is updated with Town Plan, with bylaw adjustments

5. Zoning bylaw changes subcommittee-

Energy Chapter- Suggest a paid coordinator to spearhead efforts, initially volunteer.

Waiting on preferred sites Map from Jeff Nugent.

Mobile home park zoning is 5-acre lot, change to less in urban areas.

Cell towers- see Jim's notes.

Gasoline stations must be modernized, issues in urbanized areas with light and traffic. A tesla station

Utilities, substations- must be differentiated.

Closed storage-needs work

Design Review section- needs separate attention to simplify, Example: Signs.

Still to do: Definitions, 25 items need simple changes. Intent first, then refine the language.

6. Area Wide Plan and required Bylaw changes- Fox said due to bylaw grants, a limited number of consultants were available, and if Manager approved, they could work with the one Consultant in MA. PC wants to meet them on zoom or in person.

From the AWP, a recommendation for bylaw adjustments was made. Fox suggested first steps for the Consultant to address AWP upfront and familiarize themselves with the Town Plan as they rewrite bylaws and include AWP, doing that zone first. The mixed-use buildings in red are the priority. Defined to extend this district. Commission voted to include AWP by reference. Map and fact sheets describe the districts, give an idea that zoning bylaws must accommodate the characteristics.

Fox will circulate Barrett Planning Group LLC from Hingham, MA qualifications, and schedule them for Feb. 29, or March.

7. Masterplan Process Discussion - Halle encouraged Commission First to define the vision. After public feedback, design, draft the Masterplan, finalize, implement, and monitor.

Focus on creating a sustainable, connected, and thriving community.

Physical/ Digital data sets

Identify and engage stakeholders

Establish a committee for the Master Plan.

Design engagement plan, outreach to stakeholders-focused group.

Design surveys, establish digital platform

Fox suggested a facilitator for background data, and asked if Masterplan should align with Town/Regional/State as these plans all align.

MasterPlan can align vision with State, Regional, but also there is opportunity to include things not here now. EX. Clean Mobility

Payne said a visual would be helpful to compare to the Town Plan. Find better ways of communicating with the public. Halle said to include this in the vision.

Bryan approves of the Masterplan, but asked if they could look at this after Town Plan is completed. Fox and Halle will schedule the year.

Commission members are encouraged to attend the Selectboard meetings, Wright suggested they use all platforms to make attendance work for the community.

8. Other Business- Payne encourages PC to announce the Town Plan public meeting at Town Meeting on March 5. Hard copies will be available at Town Hall, Library. Need a proposed cover, still accepting photographs-drone photos from Shaun McGinnis and Elijah Zimmer.

9. Next Meeting: Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024 3rd Floor Conference Room-The Board agreed on additional meetings to finish the Town Plan: Thursday, Feb. 29th

10. Adjourn - Bryan moved to adjourn at 8 p.m., Dunbar seconded, motion carried.

Recording Clerk Betsy Thurston