

Town of Grafton Planning Commission Minutes

Tuesday, July 24, 2018, Grafton Town Garage

Planning Commissioners Present: Eric Stevens, Liisa Kissel, Dave Culver, Kim Record, Valerie Rooney, Chris Wallace, Matt Siano, Chuck Wise (Land Use Coordinator). Community Members Present: Christine Tattersall, Daniel Michaelson, Sam Battaglini, Noralee Hall, Carol Lind, Charles Hooker

Call to order: 6:35PM

Agenda Review:

Dave provided a copy of an expanded agenda which does not add any new items but provides explanation /additional details to existing agenda items. Dave added a section called correspondence. Chuck stated that the minutes from the regular and special meetings in July will be reviewed and approved at the next regular meeting. Motion to approve amended agenda. (Liisa 2nd Chris) PASSED.

Public Comment:

Question regarding versions of the plan provided by individuals who serve on the Selectboard. Commissioners provided feedback that members of the Selectboard provided comment on the current Town Plan but that this input was not considered by the Planning Commission. Their input as individuals can be considered when the Town Plan officially goes before the Selectboard. Dave stated there were technical changes provided by WRC that do not change the content/meaning of the Town Plan. Those changes will be reviewed by the Planning Commission tonight and in future meetings.

Correspondence:

Dave reviewed the GMP application to relocate utility lines along VT 121 from Cambridgeport into Athens. The Planning Commission is a statutory party because we are a neighboring municipality. The public hearing is August 7th.

Town Plan:

Regional conformity checklist

Dave provided the Commissioners with the notes from John Bennett's regional conformity checklist. The copy is hard to read in a few sections, there are some outstanding questions with the checklist that Dave will follow up on. The substantive point under consideration is whether a separate Overview Action Plan Chapter is needed. Liisa stated this needs to be clarified because if so this would be an entirely new element to the Town Plan. The other substantive review involves looking at neighboring towns and verifying consistent land use recommendations between town boundaries. The goal is to avoid future land use conflicts between towns (example – a resource area in Grafton should match a resource area in Athens – if they had a town plan).

Appendixes

Dave provided an overview of the Appendixes and what should be updated, what needs to be included in the Town Plan. There are 6 places where the Town Plan cites Appendixes that we have yet to add. Dave stated we need to verify which Appendixes we want and which ones need to be updated. Kim worked on updating the Appendixes and will work with Chuck to load

the revised documents onto Dropbox. Question came up regarding Skip Lisle's natural resources chapter appendix. Dave stated the current plan is to add Skip's work as Appendix #4 of the Town Plan.

Maps

Dave provided Commissioners a written summary of maps (table of contents). This details the 14 maps that are currently being proposed for the Town Plan – legend, data sources, etc.

There is a need to use the Biofinder data and create a map of forest blocks and habitat connectors. Valerie stated it would be nice to site the data on the biofinder website and to include a printed map. There is some inconsistency between how biofinder defines a significant percentage of Grafton as resource areas and how we at a local level define resource areas. Liisa stated we need to consult with WRC on how best to incorporate mapping that meets the Act 171 requirements. Eric said there is a substantial difference in how WRC/Vermont depicts resource lands in Grafton and how we in Grafton view our resource areas. Resource lands are very restrictive for development and we should be careful about accepting the maps without modification. Dave stated the maps needs to match what we decide in the text concerning resource areas, habitat blocks, etc.

The future land use map needs some corrections to match rural residential, productive rural lands, and conservation areas. Consensus was that there are some changes needed in the mapping. Dave stated we first need to look at the Land Use Chapter and then make edits to the maps.

Chuck advised Commissioners that the maps have been updated over the last few years using Adobe Illustrator. These have been factual corrections only – for example adding the Grafton Highway Garage to the facilities map. There were no policy related revisions made to the maps.

Dave stated the ideal solution to mapping updates is to use Chuck's illustrator edits for the Town Plan approval process. In the next fiscal year, the goal is to include money for a wholesale WRC map update using current GIS data layers.

Dave re-stated the goal of Appendixes and Maps is to make sure they are accurate, correct and align with our updated Town Plan.

Miscellanea

Commissioners discussed miscellaneous logistics – getting a key for the highway garage, improving the computer's connection with the overhead projector, website access.

Land use chapter

Land use chapter edits were provided by Dave. Commissioners reviewed the individual changes and approved them item by item. Liisa updated the section that discussed zoning changes being considered in 2005-2006 and not recommended to move forward. Dave asked about cluster zoning recommendations in the Town Plan – is that appropriate for the Town of Grafton? Commissioners discussed edits to the Village Growth Center designation language. There remains an outstanding question from John Bennett who says more is needed in this section – Dave will follow up with John to better understand what additional information is

required. Dave pointed out that the land use designations in the plan are correct because they match what WRC uses – but that the designations in the map need to be updated. Commissioners discussed productive rural lands and resource land use categories in detail. Liisa made a correction about small home based businesses providing services to towns' people and tourists – very important that home based businesses provide services to Grafton residents. Chris talked about the town's infrastructure which is essentially roads and basic municipal services. Eric indicated this does have an impact on our subdivision regulations – especially if you have a big development that is occurring in the rural, remote parts of our town. The Town has to supply those developments with power, police, ambulance, etc. An example, a large development on Henderson Road would strain the town's ability to provide basic services. Discussion continued regarding mapping of natural resources in the town – resource areas.

Dave appreciated the comments from Commissioners and stated he will compile all the comments in a revised draft that will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting.

Valerie expressed concern about all the work being done by Dave and that while he has the summer available to us, once school starts we need to do a better job dividing up assignments. Dave stated that this is just a lot of little stuff – this isn't a problem. Dave stated the biggest issue he anticipates is arriving at a consensus or vote on the map that shows land use areas.

Adjournment

8:42 PM

Next special meeting:

August 28, 2018 (tentative – made official on August 14th)

Next regular meeting:

August 14, 2018