

Town of Grafton *Rescheduled Meeting Planning Commission Minutes*

Thursday, February 21, 2019, Grafton Town Garage

Planning Commissioners Present: Dave Culver, Chris Wallace, Matt Siano, Eric Stevens, Liisa Kissel, Valerie Rooney. Absent: Kim Record, Staff present: Chuck Wise. Community Members Present: Sam Battaglino, Christine Tattersall.

Meeting called to order: 6:30PM

Agenda approval

No changes.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve December 11, 2018 meeting minutes as amended. (Liisa, Chris 2nd) PASSED.

Motion to approve January 8, 2019 meeting minutes. (Eric, Chris 2nd) PASSED.

Abstentions: Liisa, Valerie.

Motion to approve January 15, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. (Liisa, Valerie 2nd) PASSED.

There was a question about the printability of the meeting minutes, one copy that was downloaded from the town's website has unreadable fonts.

Motion to approve January 31, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. (Liisa, Chris 2nd) PASSED.

Chuck reviewed the meeting minutes on the town's website and stated we are missing one set of minutes and another set was double posted. Chuck stated that he assumes it might have been a small oversight in that one set of minutes was simply posted twice by mistake.

Public Comment

Dave reiterated that we need to examine the meeting minutes from the website and confirm that readable copies are available for download.

Updates

Windham Regional Commission – Liisa and Eric provided a brief overview of the regional commission's work. The natural resource committee met last month and their focus is on providing comments/revisions for the Act250 review process.

Development Review Board – Chris requested the Planning Commission review and approve the nomination of Bill Kearns as Assistant Zoning Administrator. When Chuck is not available, Bill can be in a position to help people with their flood zoning and subdivision questions. This is a customer service goal that we would like to implement to make sure residents have access to someone that is able to answer zoning related questions. Dave asked a number of questions regarding the work tasks, compensation, and the partnership between Zoning Administrator and Assistant Zoning Administrator. Chuck clarified that an Acting or Assistant Administrator

position is possible and that a town may, but does not have to, designate an individual to serve. The acting position can be authorized to act only in the absence of the administrator or that individual can be tasked to share responsibilities with the administrator. Valerie talked about creating a position first, defining the role of that position, and then look to fill the position knowing that Bill Kearns is the likely choice. Chuck stressed that the state enables towns to create and fill these types of positions but towns are not required to create the position. Chuck referred to his work in Rockingham and attempting to have his assistant appointed as the Acting/Assistant Zoning Administrator. Chuck's assistant works directly with applicants and helps them with their questions and information needs. Chuck's attempt to have his assistant appointed as Asst Zoning Administrator failed because the board wanted one person solely responsible for making final decisions. Chuck's assistant still helps applicants, but was not given the title of assistant zoning administrator.

Eric and Valerie raised concerns about the duplication of authority and if a new position is created there should be clear guidance for how this position augments the work of the Zoning Administrator. Valerie stated there is something to be said for having clear paths for certain town processes and not having duplication or confusion.

Chuck stated he does not necessarily need an assistant but works well with Bill Kearns and would be open to having the assistant. Chuck emphasized that Bill is a long-time zoning administrator with more experience and working with Bill is easy, fun. Valerie asked if that has always been the case and Chuck stated that he has worked with 4 different Grafton administrators and Bill is the first person in that position that is qualified to do zoning.

Dave stated he is a huge fan of a single point of authority. When you have multiple authorities it can get confusing as to who is doing what. Dave asked that if the Planning Commission does not nominate a person for this position, can the Selectboard go ahead and appoint someone anyway? Chuck was not certain, but generally the Selectboard has broad authority to make the appointments it deems necessary.

Chuck stated the new DRB is very good, highly engaged. It was a good decision to have this Board reviewing flood zoning and subdivision applications.

Village Center Designation

Liisa reported back to Commissioners on the revisions to the village center designation map she made with Jeff Nugent from Windham Regional Commission.

<break occurred while Sam got the necessary files>

Liisa stated the revised map shows an unrealistic village center that stretches down road corridors and creates a boundary that is unlikely to be approved by the State. Chuck indicated that the center boundary looks more like a dragon and that in hindsight these boundaries are too much a stretch and need amendment. Liisa's concern is that the state may not just tweak the boundary, but decide that its so different than what they expect that

they will just send it back to us unapproved. Liisa stressed we need to define a village center that stands a chance of being approved or slightly tweaked by the State versus having it rejected wholesale. Chris asked about the development potential for Grafton and that the actual center of the village is largely built out because of water/wastewater constraints. Chris emphasized that the development is most likely to occur outside the immediate village center and that a larger designated area can support those businesses wanting to develop. Dave asked that if one boundary is approved, how hard would it be to amend it in the future. Liisa stated that this village center would have to be reapplied for every 8 years and at that time changes are expected. Liisa requested that Commissioners take a look at the village center rules and how those program requirements will apply to Grafton Village. Dave stated the goal is to vote on a map at the next meeting even though we do not yet have an adopted town plan. Liisa stated that it is good if the Planning Commission votes on the map because that is just another step that we have completed and it gets us closer to being able to submit the full application to the State.

Town Plan

Dave stated that Bill Kearns had a concern that the motion to submit the town plan to the Selectboard did not explicitly endorse the report that goes with the draft town plan. Chuck stated that the report has been approved by this Planning Commission twice already, but that there is no harm in approving it again with a revised motion. Dave asked if this reset the clock and Chuck stated he did not think so but that even if it did the Selectboard already has a generous amount of time to act so its not especially relevant.

Discussion centered on the language of the motion.

Motion for the Planning Commission to forward the finalized town plan report and the 2019-2026 Town Plan to the Selectboard and/or the Town voters. (Valerie, no 2nd). FAILED.

Motion to forward the town plan report and draft 2019-2026 Town Plan as finalized by the Planning Commission to the Selectboard. (Liisa, Eric 2nd) PASSED

Liisa asked about the report and if changes were made following the public hearing. Chuck stated that those changes were small in scale and not relevant to the content found in the report. The report is a requirement so voters are able to see very quickly what are the big changes and if these changes materially impact landowner rights. Dave stated it is comparable to an executive summary in that it only discusses big-picture changes. Chuck emphasized that the report is the same report that was approved by the Planning Commission twice before.

Dave asked about what the Planning Commission does next about the town plan. Chuck stated that the important piece to remember is that Commissioners may participate in the Selectboard proceedings as citizens but not as representatives of the Planning Commission. As representatives of the Planning Commission, its possible to clarify sections of the plan or clarify intention for how/why certain sections were developed. The law really emphasizes this separation between the Planning Commission and the Selectboard and to ensure those review

and approval processes occur separately. Liisa clarified that if we were to be present at the Selectboard meetings it would be important to identify ourselves as citizens of Grafton. It would be inadvisable to have members representing the Planning Commission and advocating for plan changes or non-changes. Dave clarified that if the plan is changed enough, it will be remanded back to the Planning Commission anyway at which point we can review those changes and make comments. Dave stated that for right now this stage is just a 'wait and see what happens' with the Selectboard.

2019 Planning Commission goals

Dave discussed the two goals he is aware of in 2019 which is the updating of the flood zoning and subdivision regulations. From one perspective, the minimum needed change is simply changing the reference of Planning Commission to Development Review Board. Liisa stated there might be other changes that would be appropriate and once we start reviewing these documents we might see inconsistencies and needed corrections. Dave asked about project priorities and Chuck indicated that the flood zoning is most likely to receive grant funding and that we will be on our own for the subdivision regulations. Chuck emphasized that WRC has an excellent planner who specializes in flood zoning and she would be able to assist the town with the update. The grant funds would be used to support the work of WRC. Dave asked about the subdivision regulations and to have John Bennett review and comment on them. Chuck expressed a preference that we internally do our review and to have John come at a later date, so we are not biased to just look at what John's feels needs to be updated. Dave stated that he will email a copy of the subdivision regulations to John for review and comments. Dave asked about consulting the Selectboard about our upcoming projects. Commissioners agreed that this would be part of a courtesy update.

Chuck mentioned the community survey and Dave's idea of soliciting feedback from a greater number of people. Eric talked about the two focus group meetings that were done in collaboration with WRC over the last 10 years. These meetings helped people consider their interests for the community, make suggestions, and then vote on those suggestions to set community priorities. Dave talked about the survey tools WRC has and to consult with them about possible models in Grafton. Chuck reviewed the survey that Rockingham did this year. Dave summarized the survey discussion by stating he is interested in collecting all the possible ideas out there and re-approaching the Planning Commission.

New Business

Dave discussed the term limits that are presented in the town report. There are some discrepancies in whose term limits are up – this year's report shows different term limits from last year's term limits. Dave will talk to Kim to clarify whose terms are up and will email the group the right record of term limits.

Valerie and the other Commissioners thanked Liisa for her service to the Planning Commission. Liisa stated that after 5 years serving on the Commission, its time for new blood. Liisa appreciated her time on the board and working with everyone.

Dave raised the discussions between the Selectboard and the Rex James solar proposal in Cambridgeport. There was a number of outstanding issues associated with the solar project but that the Selectboard has resolved them with Rex. Sam stated those issues were resolved on Tuesday night and that it is good to go. Liisa stated the town has taken back its objections and has now submitted a letter of support to the Public Utility Commission.

Dave stated the next meeting is in two weeks. Please review the village center designation requirements, Dave will send out the subdivision and flood zoning regulations, and will get back to the Planning Commission on doing a survey.

Adjournment

8:07 PM

Next regular meeting:

March 12, 2019