**Town of Grafton Meeting Planning Commission Minutes**

Tuesday, April 9, 2019, Grafton Town Garage

Planning Commissioners Present: Dave Culver, Chris Wallace, Matt Siano, Eric Stevens, Valerie Rooney. Staff present: Chuck Wise. Community Members Present: Winter Mary Wise, Willa Maureen Wise.

Meeting called to order: 6:30PM

**Reorganization meeting**

Dave and Chuck discussed the reorganization process. This month will be the election of officers and next month will be adopting rules of procedure.

Nomination of Dave Culver to serve as Chair. (Val, Matt 2nd) PASSED.

Nomination of Chris Wallace to serve as Vice Chair. (Eric, Matt 2nd) PASSED.

Nomination of Chuck Wise to serve as Clerk. (Val, Matt 2nd) PASSED.

Dave asked about the appointment of Grafton Representatives to the Windham Regional Commission. Eric stated that he has been appointed to serve a 1 year term but that the Selectboard has yet to pick a second volunteer. The responsibility to appoint Grafton citizens to serve on the Windham Regional Commission board is a Selectboard responsibility.

**Agenda approval**

No changes.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve March 12, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. (Chris, Matt 2nd) PASSED.

**Public Comment**

None

**Correspondence/Communications**

The Planning Commission received a copy of the state’s “Mapping Vermont’s Natural Heritage” which is a conservation guide and manual to the state’s biofinder and other natural resource datasets. Commissioners found the manual interesting and requested copies.

**Updates/Reports**

Financial Report

Dave distributed copies of the finances. The expenses to date are just Chuck’s time as the planner/administrator and his hours are up to date. Chuck indicated a new process going forward whereby we have the Chairs of the PC and the DRB approve his hours before submitting them to Kim for processing. The idea is to generate better oversight and accountability on staff time.

Eric stressed that professional development is an eligible expense and we should be using those funds to attend conferences and learn about town planning.

Windham Regional Commission – Eric stated that the Committees he is involved in have not been meeting lately. There is nothing new to report at this time.

Development Review Board – Chuck passed out an administrative decision with a removal of a dam in the upper branch of the Saxtons River. Chuck is using this example to highlight a challenge in the way our flood hazard bylaws are written. Its challenging to issue a permit even when we are making the situation better… removing a dam actually lowers the base flood elevation and minimizes a flood hazard. The goal is to incentivize small-scale type development that is actually reducing flood hazard. We should not impose administrative burdens to that type of work. Dave asked about how to make a decision on whether this should be an administrative decision versus a decision of the Development Review Board. Chuck says there is guidance in the regulations, but there are occasions where its hard to define what is the threshold. The other concern is that once an applicant has a DRB meeting, there are data and plan standards that have to be met and those might not be easy for some people to do without professional assistance.

Village wastewater – Chris informed people that there will be a survey in the village that is specific to water and wastewater. There is funding for sampling/testing the water for residents who have wells in the village. The Committee is thinking about all forms of public outreach to let them know of the survey and the water testing. The goal is to have an accurate baseline of data, so we know about the general water quality in the village. We have water testing on individual properties, but this will be the first time the town has examined the entire village and the quality of people’s well water. Dave asked about the testing for PFOA. Chris stated the testing does not include this. Dave asked about the Otter Creek work and if this is on the wastewater committee’s radar. Matt stated this will be considered after we complete the survey and water testing work. Dave reviewed the various grants that can support the study work and/or implementation of a facility.

**Unfinished Business**

Village Center Designation Dave discussed the village center designation. We need to give serious consideration to the rules that emphasize this is the village center, not the village. If you think about a village center, when viewed in the light of it being a ‘center” compels us to think about drawing a tighter boundary.

Community Survey Dave reviewed the Rockingham study line by line. Dave stressed that the survey is for helping Planning Commissioners in developing the next iteration of the town plan. The survey would be administered to middle and high school students, residents and business owners, and second homeowners/seasonal residences. Every question was reviewed and analyzed in detail. The important points are:

* Many of the questions were modified to better fit Grafton’s rural scale and interests. For example, the Town may not have sidewalks and bike paths but we should ask about the safety and comfort level people have for walking or bicycling on Grafton roads.
* Some questions were modified because they can be better worded (e.g., how much longer do you plan to live in Grafton? Are we asking people to guess their lifespans?)
* Some questions were modified because they could really emphasize revisions on the flood zoning or subdivision regulations (e.g., cluster development requirements to better support natural resource protection).
* Beyond the residents, we need to really emphasize surveying business owners and seasonal residents. They should not be overlooked in the survey process as they are important constituents in the Grafton community.
* We should ask if residents want zoning. Commissioners do not have an opinion on this topic, but no one knows if this is a priority for the community. We could have something in the survey that asks residents if they support zoning on a 0-5 scale. The challenge will be explaining what rural zoning is and making sure people understand what zoning does in a small town. Like the example of the Dollar General Store in Chester and how that could have been handled if zoning existed in a community. Val explained it best by saying the survey should ask people if they want no zoning, selective but strictly limited zoning, or full-scale zoning. Zoning is so broad and we have to be careful in what we ask to make sure citizens understand what exactly they are supporting.
* Some questions will be time sensitive and we should note that we could get remarkable different results when we decide to administer the survey. For example, when asked about road conditions during mud season, residents may have a less than favorable view of roads than if the survey was administered in August.

Dave intends to use this conversation to review the survey and make important tweaks to present a modified version in May. If Dave posted the amended survey using dropbox or a similar service, Commissioners can look it over and comment to Dave without violating public meeting law.

**New Business**

None

**Adjournment**

7:53 PM

**Next regular meeting:**

May 14, 2019