

## **Town of Grafton Meeting Planning Commission Minutes**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019, Grafton Town Garage

Planning Commissioners Present: Dave Culver, Matt Siano, Eric Stevens. Staff present: Chuck Wise.

Meeting called to order: 6:35PM

### **Agenda approval**

Amended agenda to include an executive session.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted (Eric, 2<sup>nd</sup> Matt) PASSED.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Correspondence/Communications**

Dave discussed the town plan report input from the Grafton Listers. The Listers consulted the professional appraisers to answer the question if they consult the town plan land use map when doing property appraisals. The town plan does not have a noticeable effect on land values and is strictly a visionary document unless someone submits for an Act250 permit. Technically that is the only time the town plan becomes a regulatory document and because of that it has very little impact on property valuations. Chuck stressed that towns with zoning do impact property values but that does not apply in Grafton.

### **Windham Regional Commission**

Eric stated there was an energy planning meeting for towns doing their energy chapters of the town plan. The meeting is more relevant for towns that are just beginning their energy planning work.

### **Development Review Board**

Chuck stated there is a meeting tentatively scheduled for January 11<sup>th</sup> right before the regular meeting of the planning commission. Technically this is a minor subdivision, but it is really just a legal re-appropriation of a family estate to surviving members. Unlike other subdivisions which are a prelude to development, there is no development proposed with this subdivision. Eric stated the subdivision plan has been modified to lower the number of new parcels created. Chuck agreed stating that in some instances, existing family parcels were made larger to accommodate land transfers and, in those circumstances, new parcels are not being created and therefore are not counted as new lots.

### **Grafton Village Wastewater Committee**

Matt provided an overview of the committee's recent work. The goal is to continue to review the studies that have been done in the past, look at the water testing data. The committee is still working and has not yet developed final conclusions or recommendations.

### **Town Plan report**

Dave reviewed the three options for the future of town plan adoption – (1) Selectboard approves the town plan as written and this version goes to town meeting for a vote, (2) Selectboard makes a substantial change(s) to the town plan which pushes us beyond the 1 year deadline and the town plan is automatically sent back to the planning commission to restart the process. (3) The Selectboard rejects the town plan and it is remanded back to the planning commission.

Dave reviewed the report that was generated in response to Selectboard requests. A draft of this report was transmitted to commissioners ahead of the meeting. The report was also reviewed by John Bennett at WRC who stated it was well done and satisfies the state requirements.

Motion to approve the town plan report as written and submit it to the Selectboard (Matt, 2<sup>nd</sup> Eric) PASSED.

### **Village Center Designation**

Dave reviewed a possible timeline for the submission of our village center request if the town plan is approved in January. Eric/Chuck predict that the regional commission confirmation process should take 1-2 months which would realistically mean submitting the village center packet to the state in March/April timeframe.

Dave reviewed the cover letter and requested comments and input. Commissioners stressed that a huge value to this designation will be for private parties to access grants and tax credits to make further investments in their properties. Dave stated he will bring a revised letter to the commissioners at a future meeting.

Dave reviewed all the other submittal requirements and Commissioners provided comments when necessary.

The map is being completed by Jeff Nugent at WRC. It requires a great deal of annotation of all the various landmarks in town. It will also require showing the national historic district boundary.

Dave cautioned Commissioners that the 'village center' is still rather large as compared to similar villages that participate in the program – it may be that our area is further pruned by state officials to meet their guidelines.

Dave wants the lion's share of the work completed before re-approaching the Selectboard for final approval.

## **Community Survey**

Dave provided a list of 75 questions to the Commissioners. These questions are largely 'fact' based questions versus 'opinion' type questions. Dave indicated that the opinion questions will be handled later. The goal is to reduce the total number of fact questions and to focus exclusively on the most important questions. Dave stressed that the survey must be something people can fill out in a reasonable timeframe.

Chuck emphasized the value of having young adults (high school kids) giving surveys to our citizens. This is a great way for people to be assisted, it teaches our kids more about their town. Chuck noted that high school students are far more approachable and encouraging for survey takers.

Chuck stated a number of fact-based questions can be accessed via property cards. The lister cards are an excellent source of information. Eric cautioned that data collected from separate sources is good, but it cannot be cross referenced with survey responses. Eric stated that it might be a worthwhile tradeoff, but to know that is a consequence of not asking those questions within one survey.

Eric stressed that his two most important data points will be transportation and home energy consumption. These are areas where we need baseline data and to evaluate those changes as we move towards more renewable and sustainable energy consumption habits.

Chuck talked about data limitations for state and federal sources that use sampling to average per capita data. This is especially true on energy consumption and transportation statistics that often use 5-10% statistical sampling methodologies.

Dave walked through each question and asked Commissioners to select questions to accept, reject, or modify. A few notable comments:

Eric stressed that people's opinions of what happens in Grafton should be a broad canvas of all people – this includes citizens, landowners, and business owners. Matt discussed that as a property/business owner in Rockingham that he is not always consulted on local issues. Eric wants everyone who is involved in Grafton in some way or another to participate.

Chuck was supportive of using the lister cards to compile a great number of our fact based questions. We could have surveyors using the listers data to ascertain average square footage of homes, heating sources, wells, etc.

Chuck indicated that the WRC has data on housing and they can analyze housing locations against watersheds, flood hazard areas, and river corridors. It would be good to know just how many homeowners are impacted by the flood zone and river corridors. Chuck also indicated that increasingly homes are getting 'flooded' with short

duration, high-intensity events. Houses that are well outside the flood plain have their basements flooded during an intense storm. It is important to note how many homes in Grafton get impacted by this type of flooding. Chuck stated that nationally it appears these precipitation events are twice as common than what we have known as Irene type flooding.

Dave stated that some questions, like the road you live on, will make it impossible for the survey to stay anonymous. Some roads only have a few homes on them.

Dave discussed a labor statistic that stated only 116 Grafton residents were employed. This is an extremely low percentage that must reflect the number of seniors, young people, and maybe seasonal residents.

Consensus was to simplify the number of work categories.

Water/wastewater questions will be pulled from the survey for the wastewater committee to review. The goal would be to have just a few questions for wastewater in the survey.

All transportation and energy questions are high priority questions. Commuting data is important, questions like carpooling can be eliminated because this is rare in a rural town. The key with transportation data is to make sure everyone can answer the questions quickly – example time it takes to commute to work (easy) versus how many miles do you drive in a week (hard).

Data on broadband/internet is available and does not need to be on the survey.

The questions about what people do in town is important – do they volunteer with the town government, the school. Do they take advantage of our civic institutions like the history center, library, outing club, etc. The goal is to stay within Grafton and only ask what residents do in this town.

The survey will be picked back up at next month's meeting.

### **New Business**

None

### **Executive Session**

Motion to go into executive session (Eric, 2<sup>nd</sup> Matt) PASSED.

### **Adjournment**

8:42 PM

**Next regular meeting:** January 11, 2020