Town of Londonderry, Vermont

Planning Commission Special Meeting Minutes
Monday, Jan 8, 2024
Twitchell Building

Attending: Commission Members: Sharon Crossman, Dick Dale, Mimi Lines, Larry Gubb, Heather Stephenson, Elsie Smith. Guests: Will Goodwin, Paul Hendler, William Sinsigalli, Patty Eisenhaur, Jennifer Ogden, B. Williams, Reed Scott, Walter Scott, Steve Tomlason, Jeff Wheeler, Ben Sargent Jim Wilbur, Sandra Wilbur

1. Meeting was called to order at 3:53 PM

2. Additions to the Agenda: none

3. Minutes of the Planning Commission Special meeting Dec. 19, 2023 was unanimously approved. (Dick proposed, Mimi seconded.)

4. Brett Williams, Walter Scott, Jim Wilbur. all commented on the need to preserve the rural character of Londonderry by restricting the use of land to promote wedding venues, unrestricted short-term rentals, and other small business that challenged the character of the neighborhood, especially those areas with many acres of very undeveloped land or those with few structures. Ben Sargant commented on his property on which has, for years, operated several different buildings as well controlled Air B&B's using long establish guidelines and the potential unfairness of the recently passed Short Term Rentals Ordinance by the Selectboard. Several others were concerned about the process and rational to be used as the PC developed land use language as a compliment in the proposed Zoning Bylaws to the Ordinance.

    5. With respect to the current status of the Proposed Bylaws, the status of the Conservation Overlay and language and map, and the requested development of land use language that defined the appropriate use and restrictions governing short-term rental that supported the recently passed Ordinance by the Selectboard.

        A: The WRC has not yet forwarded the map of the zones which includes the Conservation Overlay set at 1800 feet which Sharon stated was expected soon. Mimi, Heather, and Elsie confirmed that the policy language developed and approved at the Dec. 19, 2023 was being incorporated in the final version of the Bylaws to be the version the required would be based.

        B: There was considerable discussion using the document prepared as a starting point by Dick Dale which proposed possible Bylaw language with respect to short-term rentals. Several felt that the inclusion of some of the language of the Ordinance did not belong in the Bylaws. It is clear that the definition of "lot" needs to be updated as even the Ordinance used an older version of the definition. Questions were raised with respect to how a short-term rental could be advertised and contracted for especially the meaning of the word "platform." There was some concern about the number of lots and associated units assigned to the three different categories of owners: Owner/Homestead, Owner/Secondary Property, and Owner/Investor. What number of lots and units should be grandfathered and what numbers should prevail going forward. Finally, how could there be more consistency between the Ordinance and the Proposed Bylaws with the Ordinance focusing on enforcement and regulation and the Bylaws focused on land use. It was moved by Elsie, seconded by Mimi to refer the document to the Housing Committee for their commentary and editing.

6. Larry announced a meeting of the Wastewater Committee on Jan 10th for a discussion of the status of the 60% phase of the time line, which if accepted will allow for the next phase, the 90% phase to move forward. Larry reported that both the North and South Villages had found viable sites to serve at least twenty-two or twenty-three hook up units utilizing a “community System.” It seems that both villages would have a 6,500-gallon daily capacity and that the W.W. Committee feels good about being able to continue to meet the funding deadlines.
7. Patty summarized five priorities being developed in the work plan: prioritizing affordable housing; public education campaigns discussing resources and land benefits; utilizing more employers to subsidize and support greater diversity of housing in Londonderry and surrounding towns; helping to convert larger homes into multi-unit housing; and using both the WRC and VCRD to develop more funding sources.
8. Heather and Paul discussed the reallocation of monies for engineering voted on by the Selectboard to study and gather data which has not been studied in the past. Both felt confident that a recommendation would come by or before the May 1st time-line set by the Selectboard. Flood mitigation is currently a hot topic being discussed at the State legislative level and in light of the recent flood.
9. Sharon reported on the success of the meeting with the South Village Consultants and Town Officials. A kick off of the study is currently in the process of being scheduled. Sharon will get a copy of the proposed scope of work to the PC members.
10. Elsie announced that she will be resigning from the PC in June 1 because of taking on some very time-consuming other commitments.
11. The meeting was adjourned at 5:36.
12. The next meeting of the PC will be Jan. 22, 2024 at 3:30 in the Twitchell Building

Respectfully Submitted:
Dick Dale

Approved Jan. 22, 2024