

**TOWN OF CHESTER  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**September 17, 2018 Minutes**

**Commission Members Present:** Naomi Johnson, Claudio Veliz, Barre Pinske, Cheryl Joy Lipton.

**Staff Present:** Cathy Hasbrouck, Recording Secretary.

**Citizens Present:** Frank Bidwell.

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Naomi Johnson.

**Agenda Item 1 Citizen Comments**

There were no citizen comments.

**Agenda Item 2 Review Town Plan Chapter 3 Utilities and Facilities**

The Commission continued its review of Chapter 3. Claudio Veliz had given his comments during an August meeting. Naomi Johnson had also handed corrections in earlier. Cheryl Joy did not have many comments on Chapter 3. Naomi Johnson had a correction to page 5, the first paragraph under the heading Water. The sentence read, "The wells are normally filled . . ." and it should have said, "The tanks are normally filled . . .". She had a second correction two paragraphs further down. The text read, "Ongoing water main replacement over the next 20 years is expected to reduce that by eliminating several. . ." She wanted it changed to, "Ongoing water main replacement over the next 20 years is expected to reduce leakage."

Naomi Johnson asked Cheryl Joy to send in any changes she might have, otherwise Chapter 3 would be considered complete and will be reviewed for spelling and grammar errors before beginning the adoption process.

**Agenda Item 3 Review Town Plan Chapter 5 Education**

The Commission then took up Town Plan Chapter 5, Education. Cathy Hasbrouck talked about the process of seeking information from school administrators, which had not been fruitful due to the disruption caused by the water main problems at the elementary school. The Commission considered whether there is a reason to discuss the school curriculum in the town plan.

Frank Bidwell wondered why there was information on education and childcare in the Town Plan at all. He also said he had asked the school board why they weren't teaching Mandarin in the schools to help prepare students for living in the world today. Naomi Johnson said the Education Chapter is required by statute in the Town Plan. Oddly enough the only goal she could find in the statutes for the education chapter had to do with child care facilities. Naomi recapped the work done on the chapter so far: updating the enrollment figures and adding a short discussion of how the town was complying with Act 46 Consolidation. She suggested that the Commission consult the *Municipal Plan* to see if it lists any other specific requirements for the Education Chapter. Barre Pinske said he felt the Commission should decide whether the chapter was supposed to be a promotional tool for the town, or whether it was just supposed to list the facts. He felt the facts are listed in the chapter as it currently stands.

Naomi Johnson acknowledged that the Commission will have to decide whether it wants the Town Plan to be a promotional tool or not. She explained to the two new members of the Commission that Allison DesLauriers and Marilyn Mahusky had spoken to the Commission a couple of years ago and promised follow up on enrollment and drug abuse. Nothing has been received from them since.

Naomi then looked at the requirements for Chapter 5 in the Municipal Plan. The requirement was, “a map and statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system;” The Commission discussed the map requirement and tried to decide what area the map was expected to cover. Chester’s schools have students from Andover, Ludlow, Mount Holly, Plymouth and Cavendish.

Naomi Johnson said she thought that the Commission needed to get the four chapters it has updated, Chapter 3, Utilities and Facilities, Chapter 5, Education, Chapter 6, Energy and Chapter 10, Economics, adopted as soon as possible. Until the energy chapter is adopted, Chester voters will not be given any consideration in the siting of energy projects.

The Commission discussed whether the Town Plan would be a document people would consult when they considered moving to Chester. It was decided to ask the Town to install a hit counter for the Town Plan on the Town website to see if the document gets any attention at all. Barre Pinske said he has friends who moved to a town specifically for the schools and left the town as soon as their children finished high school and he felt that schools were important to people.

Naomi Johnson suggested that Chapter 5 be adopted as written because it did contain updated information about enrollment and Act 46. In the meantime, the Commission can seek help from the Regional Planning Commission, and Julie Hance for more potential resources. Naomi also offered to give Chapter 5 to the CAES school board at a meeting she would be attending the following night and ask them if they want to add anything.

Cheryl Joy Lipton discussed her write-up about home-schooling in Chester and the Commission agreed to include the writeup in Chapter 5. Frank Bidwell asked about the second goals and policies entry in Chapter 5 which states, “Any new development which results in significant increases in the number of school-age children should not place a significant burden on Chester’s taxpayers or existing school facilities.” He wanted to know what would happen if there was an influx of people moving into town. Naomi Johnson explained that if the influx of people was the result of a large housing development that would have gone through the Act 250 process, the impact of the increase in population on town facilities including police, fire, ambulance, water and sewer as well as schools would be considered during the Act 250 hearings and the developer would have to mitigate the impact on the town.

Naomi Johnson then turned to Chapter 10 of the Town Plan, economic development. She explained that the chapter had been updated a couple of years ago, but had not been adopted. Now the progress made in the Village Center designation process needed to be included in the chapter. She pointed out the proposed text in italics on page 6. The text showed which goals in the Town Plan the Village Center designation supports.

Barre Pinske pointed out that there was a 10% tax credit available to property owners in the designated Village Center for historic preservation which no one has used. He wondered if enough people knew about it and whether some promotional material could be developed. Cheryl Joy Lipton said that Julie Hance and Carla Westine had staffed a booth at the Fall

Festival, promoting the Village Center study and benefits. Cheryl Joy Lipton suggested that the Village Center designation be an overlay in the zoning maps. Cathy Hasbrouck said that many people had told her it was important not to confuse the Village Center designation with zoning districts and to keep the two as separate as possible.

Barre Pinske said that he was concerned by the number of businesses leaving Chester, despite the efforts of so many people, including the Village Master Plan and Economic Development committee. He worried that the problems to be solved required more knowledge and skills than the committee members had and they were being saddled with a burden that was too big for them to bear.

Naomi Johnson discussed the origins of the economic development chapter of the Town Plan. She said it was mainly developed by Jason Rasmussen of the Regional Planning Commission. Input from the local Economic Development committee was solicited. Naomi said she didn't find the information helpful at all. The economic development chapter as it stands does meet the state requirements for a Town Plan.

Claudio Veliz said that planners and architects know that national chain stores suck the economic life out of a town and they also know what kind of businesses are likely to produce positive results in a small community. The time to write language into a town plan that would prevent a chain store from locating in the town is before a chain store applies for a permit. Barre Pinske asked Claudio Veliz if he could write up a description of businesses that would have a positive impact in Chester which could be included in the Town Plan. Claudio agreed to do so.

The Commission then looked at the text Cheryl Joy Lipton had composed for Chapter 6 - Energy, to give guidance to the process of restoring an energy generation site. The text read, in part, "Plants for site reclamation and restoration after decommissioning an energy generation site should be chosen with plant communities in mind, and considering the original composition of the community before disturbance." The text went on to cite five publications that would give guidance for identifying the soil, light and water conditions of area to be restored. Barre Pinske said he was reluctant to create a list of plants that severely restricts the choices available to the developers of an energy generation site. He compared the list of plants to the restrictions he encountered on Cape Cod when he bought property on the King's Highway and then had to get permission from a committee to paint his house a certain color.

Naomi Johnson clarified that the Town Plan is not regulation, it is policy and provides guidance to the Public Utility Commission when it is deciding on the conditions of a renewable energy generation permit. Barre Pinske conceded the point, but continued to be concerned that suggestions in the Town Plan would become bylaw requirements. The terms "gateway drug" and "control" were used. Frank Bidwell said he was disappointed in the lack of bylaw protection for historic buildings in Chester. He was concerned that nothing will prevent the buildings from losing their historic function and appearance.

#### **Agenda Item 4 Review Reporting Form Process for interim bylaw and Town Plan changes**

Naomi Johnson discussed a tool from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) which outlines the statutory steps that must be followed in order to make a change to a Town Plan or Bylaws. She read the text on page 8 that describes what the Reporting Form for Municipal Plan Amendments must contain, "The report shall address the extent to which the plan, as amended, is consistent with the goals established in §4302 of this

title". She discussed the current draft of the reporting form and pointed out the goals she added to the report from §4302. She recapped the status of the four Town Plan chapters as follows:

Chapter 3, Utilities and Facilities, is still open for comments from the Commissioners.

Chapter 5, Education, will have text about home schooling added and is open for any additions the school board may offer.

Chapter 5, Energy, will have the text describing the town's wishes for plantings that are functional native plant communities.

Chapter 10, Economic Development is open to receive what Claudio can write concerning proven economic development ideas for towns of 3,000 inhabitants.

Naomi Johnson invited the Commissioners to look through the goal in §4302 and see if there were any more that should be included in the Reporting Form.

#### **Agenda Item 5 Set date for next meeting**

The next meeting will be Monday October 1, 2018. After some discussion, Naomi Johnson declared that the meeting will be used to study the proposed zoning districts. Amendments to the Town Plan should be given to the Recording Secretary for discussion at the second October meeting. Barre Pinske suggested that the Commission look for a way to include language in the bylaws that would facilitate light manufacturing facilities in areas that are not normally thought of as sites for a factory. Naomi Johnson suggested that Barre discuss the idea with Brandy Saxton. A discussion on strategies to attract jobs to the area ensued.

Cheryl Joy Lipton moved to adjourn the meeting. Claudio Veliz seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the meeting was adjourned.