

**TOWN OF CHESTER
PLANNING COMMISSION**

April 18, 2019 Minutes

Commission Members Present: Naomi Johnson, Barre Pinske, Tim Roper, Peter Hudkins and Cheryl Joy Lipton.

Staff Present: Michael Normyle, Zoning Administrator, Cathy Hasbrouck, Recording Secretary.

Citizens Present: Melody Reed, Tom Knockenhauer, Debbie Knockenhauer.

Call to Order

Naomi Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM in the zoning office.

Agenda Item 1, Citizen Comments

No citizens offered comments.

Agenda Item 2, Reorganizational Meeting

Barre Pinske nominated Naomi Johnson to be the Commission Chair. Tim Roper seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. A vote was taken and Naomi Johnson was elected Chair. Barre Pinske nominated Tim Roper to be Commission Clerk. Cheryl Joy Lipton seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. A vote was taken and Tim Roper was elected Clerk.

Agenda Item 3 Continue Workshop on Chester Unified Development Bylaws at the Town Hall and other locations.

The Commissioners discussed some items while waiting for the van to arrive and start the tour. Barre Pinske said he was concerned about economic sustainability in an area such as Gassetts, which was discussed at the April 10, 2019 meeting. He felt another zoning district that offered more uses and allowed mixed residential and commercial/industrial uses. He wondered if it was possible for a zoning district to have a different noise standard that allowed for the noise of automobile repair, for instance, in an area that also allowed residences. He noted that zoning bylaws seem to be intent on preventing conflict between parties such as a business and a residence in proximity with each other. He suggested that the area around Gassetts, Elm Street and possibly along the Green Mountain Turnpike could allow both residences and businesses, where the residents accept a higher noise level or other hazards or potentially objectionable conditions.

Cheryl Joy Lipton said she had spoken to Jens Hilke of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department about getting help to change the Town Plan, zoning map and bylaws to accommodate Vermont state mandates for forest block continuity. She said Jens had worked on a community values mapping event in Chester several years ago.

At this point the van showed up and the meeting relocated to the van. All 5 members of the Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator Michael Normyle, Recording Secretary Cathy Hasbrouck, and citizens Melody Reed, Tom Knockenhauer and Debbie Knockenhauer got into the van. As all meeting attendees fit in the van, discussion was able to resume as the van started down Elm Street.

Elm Street is in the proposed General Business district. Observations made included

- Cheryl Joy Lipton noted that residential and commercial/industrial uses are mixed together
- Tim Roper saw more residences than he expected to see and less undeveloped land than he expected
- Wrecked vehicles were stored in the flood plain
- The dog kennel on the east side of Elm Street had been the subject of considerable controversy about noise levels when it applied for a conditional use permit
- There was some open space at the corner of Elm Street and Route 11. The Commissioners wondered whether the parcel could be sub-divided.

The van entered the driveway of the Gold River Industrial park. This area would also be part of the proposed General Business district. The owners of the park have had a preliminary hearing to sub-divide 2 parcels into 7 lots which currently have municipal water and will have municipal sewer connections.

The van then followed Route 11 east. Observations made included

- Peter Hudkins said the area had had commercial uses in the past. There had been a log home building business on the south side of Route 11.
- Naomi Johnson pointed out a Quonset hut style building on the north side of Route 11 and said it had been a grocery store.
- Several Commissioners thought the area could remain the proposed R3 district. The uses observed were allowed in the proposed R3 district.
- Michael Normyle observed that several parcels of land near Green Mountain Turnpike and Route 11 were owned by one individual.
- As the van passed Fletcher Hill, Michael Normyle said that there were several residences on sizeable lots in the subdivision.
- Peter Hudkins pointed out a Class IV road on the north side of Route 11. He said the road was in bad shape and there was always a new project being built along the road.

The van returned west on Route 11 and traveled south on Route 103.

- The Commissioners observed that the municipal sewer ended at the Family Center and Drew's.
- Peter Hudkins wondered whether there was a use for the log landing/transport area at the corner of Peck Road and Route 103.

- The van drove up the driveway at Drew's. Peter Hudkins explained that the facility had been a wood drying kiln many years ago. The Commissioners were surprised at the size of the facility.
- Naomi Johnson explained that a recent expansion at Drew's reduced the need to transport product to be stored off-site and later returned to the facility for further processing.
- The Commissioners noted the new mixed-use business on the east side of Route 103 N that includes the sale of heavy equipment and residential rental units.

The van passed along Route 11 and Elm Street to Route 103 north.

- Peter Hudkins noted that VTrans had plans to eventually widen Route 103. He said the right of way is wide enough to allow the change. He said the town should be vigilant about enforcing setbacks along the road.
- The van stopped to look at a family-run automobile repair business on Route 103. This business cannot grow any further until it moves to a zoning district that allows automobile repair. The progress of this business had been discussed at length during the April 10, 2019 meeting.
- Peter Hudkins said there was an extraction business and a sawmill on Wyman Falls Road.
- The Jersey Girls farm was observed across from the automobile repair business.
- Another log yard was observed further north on Route 103 on the west side of the road between the road and the river.
- The van stopped at the renovated building on the east side of Route 103 in the area known as Gassetts. The building was mixed-use, retail and rental apartments.
- Travelling further north the Commissioners observed the single parcel that is currently designated Residential Commercial which has 2 single family homes and an automobile repair garage on it.
- They observed a second automobile repair business a bit further north on the east side of the road and an older home that is used as a short-term rental on the west side of Route 103. Peter Hudkins said the building slept 25 people.

The van returned south on Route 103 and traveled east on Route 10.

A restaurant and B&B, a branch of a roofing company and a plumbing and heating company were observed. The van turned around at Chandler Road and returned to Route 103. Michael Normyle mentioned the auction barn on Route 10 that is currently not being used for any purpose. The van did not continue east on Route 10 to view the property. It returned west on Route 10 and south on Route 103.

The van followed Church Street to Route 11 and turned west on Route 11.

The Commissioners noted the place where the V5 district changed to V3 and R2.

The van stopped in Baba a Louis' parking lot to look at the land further back from the road. It continued west past Blue Hills Road. The Commissioners observed the new equipment garage built on the south side of the road in an existing open area and the fitness home business further along Route 11 on the right. The van stopped at the armory to see that the present owners are not

actively using the building, and continued to Andover Road. Barre Pinske observed that most of the land next to the road was developed, mainly with single family residences.

Back in the center of Chester, the van followed Route 35 south. The Commissioners observed the entrance to Dennis Allard's firewood processing and quarry business. Cathy Hasbrouck asked if changing the zoning district to R18 would have any impact on that business.

The van returned north along Route 35 and River Street, then back to the Town Hall via Depot Street. The meeting moved to the Zoning office.

Issues that were raised in the van that were not linked to specific locations in town included

- What the Commission would like to do about development, if any, in a flood plain. This needed to be addressed with Brandy Saxton in a separate meeting.
- A review of the status of non-conforming lots and lots that become non-conforming when they are assigned to a different zoning district.
- Should anything be done about a lot that is transferred via quit claim and not warranty deed when it is sold. The lot will not be automatically merged into abutting parcels owned by the same entity. This could have some implications for the current use program.

Barre Pinske asked about the schedule for completing the bylaws. Naomi Johnson said she would discuss this with Brandy Saxton and find out if the project is behind. Brandy Saxton has not raised a concern about this. Naomi Johnson said she would like to wrap up the first draft soon and begin public hearings. Tim Roper and other Commission members said they would like to know what the deadline is.

Cheryl Joy Lipton resumed the discussion about asking Jens Hilke of Vermont Fish and Wildlife for help with planning for forest block connectivity. Naomi Johnson asked Cheryl Joy Lipton to send a list of the materials needed by the Fish and Wildlife staff to conduct a study to Cathy Hasbrouck who would send the requested materials to them. The Fish and Wildlife Department could work on recommendations separate from the bylaw project. Naomi Johnson said she felt it was important to gather public input on the bylaws by holding hearings soon. She wanted to see the Fish and Wildlife input as a separate, parallel process to finalizing the first draft of the bylaws and holding hearings.

Michael Normyle asked Cathy Hasbrouck if she could send copies of the meeting minutes that listed requested changes to the zoning maps to Brandy Saxton by Tuesday April 22nd. Cathy Hasbrouck said she could. That would allow Brandy Saxton to bring the zoning map up to date.

Naomi Johnson explained the process she used to create an updated Current Use map. She said that Brandy Saxton thought the method was 99% accurate.

Cheryl Joy Lipton said she wanted to talk about environmental issues with the entire Commission. No one was opposed to discussing those issues. Tim Roper said the goal of the Commission was to balance protecting the environment and the economy. He said there is no long-term future without both a healthy environment and a working economy.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be the regularly scheduled first Monday of the month, May 6, 2019 at 6:00 PM. Michael Normyle said he would contact Brandy Saxton and request her attendance.

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