

**TOWN OF CHESTER  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**February 6, 2017**

**Board Members Present:** Naomi Johnson, Tom Hildreth and Claudio Veliz.

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

**Visitors Present:** Kelly Arrison, Amy Mosher, Marilyn Mahusky, Phil Perlah.

**Agenda Item 1, Review of previous meeting minutes**

Claudio Veliz moved to accept the minutes for the January 16, 2017 meeting. Tom Hildreth seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

**Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments for Non-agenda Items**

Kelly Arrison spoke about the January 31<sup>st</sup> showing of the planning video *Heart and Soul*. He said about 70 people had attended. He showed a copy of the Essex, VT town plan which had been developed using techniques advocated by the producer's of the *Heart and Soul* video. He urged members of the commission to look at the Essex Town Plan to get ideas for Chester's Town Plan. (Secretary's note, the Essex, VT town plan can be seen at [http://www.essex.org/vertical/sites/%7B60B9D552-E088-4553-92E3-EA2E9791E5A5%7D/uploads/2016\\_Essex\\_Town\\_Plan-FINAL-030216.pdf](http://www.essex.org/vertical/sites/%7B60B9D552-E088-4553-92E3-EA2E9791E5A5%7D/uploads/2016_Essex_Town_Plan-FINAL-030216.pdf))

**Agenda Item 3, Status of Chester's Letter of Intent for Energy Planning assistance**

Naomi Johnson announced that Chester was not one of the three towns chosen by the Regional Planning Commission to receive funding and assistance in preparing an expanded energy chapter for their Town Plan to meet the requirements of Act 174. If one of the 3 chosen towns decides not to go ahead with the Regional Planning Commission's help, Chester would be offered an opportunity to receive that assistance. There also may be other sources of help available through the Regional Planning Commission. Naomi expects that Jason Rasmussen of the RPC will meet with the Chester Planning Commission at some point in March to discuss chapters of the Town Plan including the energy chapter.

The discussion then focused on the Energy chapter Act 174 requirements and the summary of tasks sent in the meeting packet. The members agreed that it looked like a lengthy process. It wasn't clear how much of the work could be done by volunteers and how much would require professional expertise. Some of the questions the Commission will have for Jason Rasmussen when he comes to a meeting are how the Chester Planning Commission would go about the process.

Tom Hildreth pointed out that towns in Vermont have very little say in the Public Service Board's proceedings when authorizing an energy project. Having an Energy chapter that meets Act 174 requirements is the only way Chester could have any voice in the siting of an energy project. The citizens of Chester would be very disappointed if the Commission did not make a strong effort to produce a workable Energy chapter.

**Agenda Item 4 Nomination of Administrative Officer**

Naomi Johnson explained that Zoning Administrator Michael Normyle's term ends in March. The Planning Commission is responsible for nominating at least one candidate for the position to the Select Board. The Select Board has decided that incumbents must re-apply for their position if they want to be considered for re-appointment and that they will seek other candidates by advertising positions when

each term ends. The Select Board has advertised the Zoning Administrator position. It will accept applications until February 17, 2017.

The Commission discussed this development. The following is a summary.

Naomi Johnson proposed that each applicant be given copies of the pages from the Zoning Administrators Handbook published by the state of Vermont which list the qualifications needed in a Zoning Administrator. [ This document is at <https://www.sec.state.vt.us/media/262016/zoningadministrators handbook.pdf> .]

Each candidate would be interviewed separately in open session. Each candidate would explain to the Planning Commission how he or she meets the qualifications listed. Claudio Veliz proposed that candidates submit their arguments in writing as well as verbally. The Commission would also accept letters of reference at that time of the interview.

The Commission would then meet in deliberative session to discuss the candidates. Each member would rate each candidate. Claudio Veliz and Tom Hildreth suggested that the ratings be anonymous. Naomi Johnson agreed. The Recording Secretary would tally the ratings. A decision to recommend one or more candidates to the Select Board would be arrived at.

Phil Perlah asked what would happen if a large number of candidates applied for the position? Would each one be interviewed? Initially, Naomi Johnson said yes, the candidates would all be interviewed, as she did not expect an overwhelming number.

It was finally proposed, subject to any other issues which may be discovered in the rest of the meeting's agenda, that the Planning Commission would meet on Tuesday, February 28, 2017 to review the list of applicants and decide on a date for interviews. If a large number of applications had been received, a plan for processing them would be made then.

Marilyn Mahusky asked if the Planning Commission could make a stronger effort to meet on the days it is normally scheduled, that is, the first and third Mondays of the month. The board agreed to do so as often as possible. The next two scheduled meetings of the Commission conflict with the federal President's Day holiday and Town Meeting day.

It was also noted during the discussion that the terms of two Commission members, Randy Wiggin and Tom Hildreth would expire in March. They would need to go through an interview process with the Select Board that has not yet been fully formulated. Marilyn Mahusky suggested that the Commission put off the recommendation for Zoning Administrator until the Commission vacancies had been filled by the Select Board. There was general agreement to go ahead with the process as planned, as the Select Board's plans and intentions for candidate interviews were not known.

### **Agenda Item 5 Status of Town Plan by Section**

Naomi Johnson reported that she contacted Jason Rasmussen on February 1, 2017, the day after the packets for the meeting were mailed. It turned out that Jason worked on the Town Plan in 2016 and did not share all of his work with the Commission for review. He sent Naomi his versions of all the chapters, the introduction and the goals and policies sections. Naomi directed Cathy Hasbrouck, the Recording Secretary, to consolidate the changes in Jason's versions with any changes the Commission has made since the spring of 2016, and to include the complete new versions in the next meeting's packet. Jason's e-mail to Naomi and an updated sheet of actions taken and current status will also be included in the packet.

Amy Mosher asked about what happened to the goals and policy section that had been at the end of

each chapter in the 2015 Plan. Naomi explained that the Commission is looking at a proposal to consolidate the goals and policies for all the chapters into one chapter. This has been done in the versions Jason sent on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Agenda Item 6 Commissioner's comments regarding Chester's existing Town Plan considering the VT ACCD's *The Municipal Plan planning manual September 2016*.**

Naomi asked the Commission members to look at *The Municipal Plan* manual (<http://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/DHCD-Planning-Manual-Module1.pdf>), particularly the section which addresses writing a town plan from scratch, and to prepare comments about it for the next meeting.

**Agenda Item 7 Old Business**

Naomi Johnson said that further changes to the Unified Development Bylaws are deferred to future UDB versions. Issues that are being tracked for future changes include Air BnB permitting, advice on Group Homes from attorney Jim Carroll and language regarding timing of original structure demolition when a replacement home is permitted. In response to a question from Tom Hildreth, Naomi said that, at least until the Select Board rules on the current set of proposed changes, further UDB changes may be discussed, but action will be deferred.

Cathy Hasbrouck announced that VPR planned a discussion on Air BnB's as part Vermont Edition to be broadcast Tuesday February 7th. [It is now a podcast and can be listened to here: <http://www.stitcher.com/podcast/vermont-public-radio-vpr-vermont-edition-podcast/e/49058872?autoplay=true>]

**Agenda Item 8 New Business.**

Claudio announced a Webinar on planning, *Town Plans That Matter*, is being given by the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission on Wednesday February 15<sup>th</sup> from 12:15 to 1:00 PM. Details can be found here: [http://swcrpc.org/event/webinar-town-plans-matter/?instance\\_id=2323](http://swcrpc.org/event/webinar-town-plans-matter/?instance_id=2323)

Claudio also asked how the agenda for a meeting was set. Naomi explained that she works with Michael Normyle and Cathy Hasbrouck to establish an agenda. She made the decision to put Citizen Comments on non-agenda items at the beginning of the meeting so someone who had a simple announcement to make would not be obliged to wait through the entire meeting in order to make an announcement or comment. She also decided to keep Old Business as an on-going agenda item.

**Agenda Item 9, Set date for next meeting**

Tuesday February 28, 2017 at 7:00 PM was chosen for the date of the next meeting, subject to the room being available.

Claudio Veliz moved to adjourn the meeting. Tom Hildreth seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.