

**TOWN OF CHESTER
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**February 28, 2017
DRAFT Minutes**

Commission Members Present: Naomi Johnson, Claudio Veliz, Tim Roper, Barre Pinske.

Staff Present: Michael Normyle, Zoning Administrator, Cathy Hasbrouck, Recording Secretary, Julie Hance, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.

Visitors Present: Arne Jonynas, Shawn Cunningham, Phil Perlah, Lee Gustafson.

Agenda Item 1, Introduce Members

The commission members introduced themselves. Naomi Johnson welcomed the new members.

Agenda Item 2, Review status of member's terms and other organizational items

Zoning Administrator Michael Normyle explained that Planning Commission terms were 3 years long and expired in March. Phil Perlah asked about the terms of the two new members. Julie Hance explained that the new members were replacing members whose terms expired in March of 2017. The terms of the two new members of the Commission, Tim Roper and Barre Pinske, would expire in March, 2020. The terms of the existing members, Naomi Johnson and Claudio Veliz would expire in March, 2018. Naomi noted that the Commission is still a 5-member Commission that needs a quorum of 3 in order to have a meeting. She asked members to let the Commission know when they could not attend a meeting so the Commission could be sure of having a quorum present.

The Commission then elected a Chair and Clerk. Naomi Johnson explained that the Clerk is not a secretary. Julie Hance said that technically, the Clerk would sign the minutes. Claudio Veliz nominated Naomi Johnson as Chair. Tim Roper seconded the motion. No other nominations were made. A vote was taken and Naomi Johnson was elected Chair. Tim Roper nominated Claudio Veliz as Clerk. Barre Pinske seconded the nomination. A vote was taken Claudio was elected Clerk.

Naomi Johnson told the Commissioners that they had support from Michael Normyle, the Zoning Administrator, Julie Hance Town Manager Executive Assistant and from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT). The VLCT had a handbook for new Planning Commission members and a Municipal Assistance Center which had online and in person resources for Planning Commissioners. Barre Pinske asked who was allowed to consult with VLCT staff. Julie Hance explained that the VLCT could charge for legal advice given to a member of a town board or commission and they would need authorization from more than a board member if the

requested information would require payment. Naomi spoke of the Municipal Assistance Center online resource. Shawn Cunningham said there was a downloadable resource that would answer many questions.

Michael Normyle said that VLCT sponsored training sessions 2 -3 times a year. He recommended the State Government Municipal Day taking place Friday September 15, 2017 as an event worth attending. Among other workshops were some on writing the Town Plan. The town of Chester would pay fees and mileage for Commissioners and staff who would want to attend the State Government Municipal Day.

Agenda Item 3 Review process of recommendation to Select Board for Zoning Administrator appointment

Naomi Johnson explained that the Planning Commission still had recommend to the Select Board a candidate for Zoning Administrator. She gave the history of the process so far. Julie Hance reported that Jay Jurkoic was still interested in applying for the Zoning Administrator position. Michael Normyle also confirmed that he was interested in the position.

Naomi Johnson reviewed the interview process. She noted that the Select Board had chosen to interview candidates in executive session and said that she would prefer to do the same with these interviews. She read an e-mail from the town's attorney, Jim Carroll which discussed statutory requirement for interviews. The Commission could chose either open meeting or executive session.

It was resolved to advertise again for candidates and to give the two new members a chance to familiarize themselves with the process before the next meeting. Barre Pinske said that he would prefer to interview in executive session and would accept written comments from citizens which were received at least 5 days before the meeting so that Commissioners would have time to study them. Tim Roper asked where the town would advertise the position. Julie Hance said that the town was required to advertise in the Message for the Week, the newspaper of record, and usually advertised in the Chester Telegraph and Vermont Journal as well. Barre Pinske suggested that the town advertise at colleges close by. Naomi Johnson asked if Chester could advertise with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Julie said it could.

Phil Perlah suggested that the Chair of the Development Review Board might also want to sit in on the interview, as the DRB also relies heavily on the Zoning Administrator.

The Commission agreed that it would like to advertise the position again and will have the conduct of interviews as a future agenda item after the new members have digested the documents about the process.

Agenda Item 4, Review status of current Town Plan

Naomi Johnson introduced the bound version of the Town Plan draft and gave some history of the current draft. She had prepared notes referring to the Municipal Plan Module 1 document put

out by the state of Vermont. Those notes will be sent to Commissioners in the next information packet. Copies of the Municipal Plan Module 1 document will also be sent to the new members.

Barre Pinske suggested that the Commission look at the town plans of some towns who are succeeding in revitalizing themselves. He agreed to prepare a list of towns who have done that for the next meeting.

Claudio Veliz suggested that the Commission could have input from the Master Plan Steering Committee. Julie Hance suggested that a chapter of the Town Plan refer to the committee and its work.

Michael Normyle explained that the current Town Plan will expire in 2020. Shawn Cunningham said that after 2020, the next revision to the Plan would not be due until 2028, the renewal period had been lengthened.

In the Town Plan discussion earlier this year, Marilyn Mahusky and Alison DesLauriers, representing the two Chester School Boards had agreed to obtain more current information about enrollment and other issues. The Commission could now invite them to discuss those questions and how Act 46 would now affect the schools going forward.

Agenda Item 6 Discuss a potential grant to audit current zoning and recommend possible changes with Julie Hance

Julie Hance discussed an effort underway to audit the town's zoning bylaws to see if the current structure can actually support meeting the town's goals for itself. She noted that the zoning philosophy has not changed since the first zoning was enacted in 1974. She said the process was expected to take less than a year and it would produce a report with recommendations for specific actions to take.

Julie said that David Pisha, the town manager would like development in Chester to be a simpler, easier process that required fewer experts. Michael Normyle agreed that the process should be simpler for applicants. Claudio Veliz said he felt an underlying structure could help the town make better decisions about development, and that incorporating occasional professional expertise would be useful. Barre Pinske said he sees the town having problems with things that are happening, rather than the town being able to make things happen.

David Pisha also wanted town board members to have access to education. The Commissioners said they were interested in education on noise, planning, floodways, small town transportation issues and energy, including the state energy goals and requirements. Naomi Johnson said work had begun to find a sound expert who could speak to the Development Review Board and the Planning Commission. Jason Rasmussen from the Regional Planning Commission would also soon be attending a Planning Commission meeting.

Barre Pinske brought up the concept of marketing and attracting new citizens to Chester. Julie Hance said that the Planning Commission could do things to support marketing, but marketing

was not actually a planning function. Town Manager David Pisha is also working on marketing strategies.

Agenda Item 8 Discuss future meeting times

It was agreed that the Commission will continue to meet at 7:00 PM, and that meetings will last about 90 minutes.

Citizen Comments

Phil Perlah asked about a memo from Select Board member Dan Cote to the Planning Commission which had 8 items he (Dan Cote) wanted further discussion on. Phil Perlah wondered if the Planning Commission could address these items one at a time over a period of months and present any bylaw changes to the Select Board incrementally. This led to a discussion of how the bylaws are changed and what process is followed. Naomi Johnson and Julie Hance explained that the Planning Commission usually holds public hearings about the changes. They must then report the planned changes to the Regional Planning Commission and surrounding towns using the Reporting Form. The changes are then turned over to the Select Board which must hold public hearings before deciding whether to accept the changes. The process is mandated by state statute. Given the required process, the consensus among citizens and Commissioners was that bylaw changes should be grouped together.

Lee Gustafson brought up three items. The first was a proposal that the Select Board, the Development Review Board and the Planning Commission meet together in an effort to better understand each board's view of its purpose, jurisdiction and philosophy. There was a good deal of discussion about this. Julie Hance explained that the meeting would fall under the open meeting law. An agenda would have to be published and the agenda must include citizen comments. This meeting would be a special meeting for the Select Board, not one of its regularly scheduled meetings. Several people endorsed the idea of the meeting being a chance to explore the intent of the Unified Development Bylaws, and how much discretion, if any, the DRB has in applying them to a permit application.

The second item Lee discussed was a formal method to keep notes on the UDB's. This could aid in interpreting and clarifying the bylaws and keeping track of possible changes to be considered.

Lee also pointed out that the Zoning Administrator was also an enforcement agent for the town and, as such, he or she would need equipment such as a sound meter in order to enforce the bylaws.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be Monday August 7, 2017 at 7:00 PM.

Claudio Veliz moved to close the meeting. Tim Roper seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.