

TOWN OF CHESTER
PLANNING COMMISSION
March 19, 2018
Minutes

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

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

Citizens Present: Lee Gustafson, Phil Perlah and Julie Hance.

Agenda Item 1, Review minutes from February 19, 2018 meeting

Tim Roper moved to accept the minutes from the February 19, 2018 meeting. Claudio Veliz seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and the minutes were accepted as written.

Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

Agenda Item 3, Discuss Town Plan Goals in the initial draft Zoning Audit and develop list of requested examples for Place Sense

The Commission considered the Zoning Audit document presented by Brandy Saxton of Place Sense at the last meeting. The document lists issues where the Chester Unified Development Bylaws do not support the Goals and Policies of the draft Town Plan that is currently being updated by the Commission. Naomi Johnson asked the Commission to look at the goals listed in the first column, labeled Town Plan, and see if they want to change or delete any of the goals listed or add new goals, in order to make Brandy's work more focused and productive. Naomi confirmed that the task before the Commission that evening was not to re-write the Town Plan. A new Town Plan is not needed until 2023. The task is to mark any goal in the zoning audit document the Commission does not think merits further investigation as part of the Zoning Audit process, or to modify a goal that they do not agree with.

The first goal on the zoning audit document was, "Future development shall be consistent with the future land use categories and map." Once it was determined that the map being referred to was the Future Land Use map attached to the current Town Plan, that the current zoning districts differ from the Future Land Use map, and that eventually the differences would be addressed as part of the Zoning Audit, the Commission accepted this goal.

The second item on the zoning audit document was a group of four goals focused on concentrating residential development in the Village Center area. Barre Pinske felt that

concentrated development, where several houses shared a common water supply and wastewater disposal system, should be allowed in other districts that did not have access to municipal water and sewer service. Concentrated development should not be limited to the Village Center area. The Commission decided that they agreed with the first 3 goals as presented and that those goals presented did not forbid concentrated development in other districts. The Commission found the text of the fourth goal in the group, “New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to the Village Center, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities...” to be confusing. Feeling that these words needed to be evaluated in context, they set that goal aside. Lee Gustafson asked about the practicality of developing housing in the village center, given the lack of available parcels. Claudio Veliz said subdividing existing buildings was a possibility. Also, that several houses in the center of town had open space around them that could be developed if the bylaws permitted it. Cheryl Joy Lipton confirmed that view, saying she herself lives in the village center on a 5-acre lot with a single house on it.

The third group in the list was two goals which addressed higher density commercial, industrial and community service structures within the Village Center area. These two goals were accepted once the phrase, “and within walking distance of most of the residents of the village” was struck from the first goal.

The fourth group of goals addressed economic and commercial growth, particularly in the Village Center, Commercial-Industrial, Southern Gateway and Adaptive 3 areas. The Commission discussed the difference between economic growth and commercial growth. Economic growth was seen as business activity, whether or not it involves many workers, much equipment or inventory. Commercial growth would be activity such as store fronts, or anything that involved the production, buying or selling of goods. The four goals in this item were accepted by the Commission.

Given other items on the agenda, this task was shelved for the present. It was resolved to keep this task as the sole agenda item for the next meeting and that Commission members would review the rest of the document and make notes prior to the next meeting. Naomi Johnson said that Brandy Saxton had offered to supply examples of bylaws that cover some of the shortcomings listed in the right-hand column of the document labeled Assessment. Naomi cited the Brattleboro Bylaws as an example of zoning districts with many permitted uses allowed. She suggested that the Commission members could also make a list of examples they would find helpful. Barre Pinske suggested examples for a small industrial park and for a cluster development away from the village center. Julie Hance pointed out that Brandy has promised to bring examples of bylaws supporting denser residential development. Michael Normyle said he was certain that large houses in the Village Center could be converted to multi-family housing under the current bylaws.

Agenda Item 4, Eddy Road Solar project

Tim Roper gave a report on the site visit to the Eddy Road Solar array Thursday, March 15, 2018. He had attended the February 21, 2018 Selectboard meeting where this was discussed. He said that Eddy Rd is a dead-end road off Potash Brook Road, which is off Andover Road. Tim said he lives within a mile of the installation. The Eddy Farm is a 250-acre parcel. The solar array would be installed in a gravel pit that was last operated in the 1960's. The piece of land can barely support vegetation. It gets good solar exposure and cannot be seen from

any other residences in the area. The maps distributed to the Commission look accurate to him. The developer, Bruce Genereaux of Green Mountain Community Solar, is asking for the Planning Commission's support for designating the site a preferred site by the Vermont Public Utilities Commission, in that it is not capable of supporting other productive uses such as agriculture. A preferred site will receive a higher rate per kilowatt hour produced. Tim said he felt this was an excellent site for a solar installation. Barre Pinske moved to sign the letter. Cheryl Joy Lipton seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed. Naomi Johnson signed the letter for the Planning Commission.

Agenda Item 5 Review and update Planning Commission schedule

The Commission looked at the updated Planning Commission schedule. Naomi Johnson said she had added the task of Draft Chapter 3 to the schedule and given it a March 2018 date. She wanted to change the date to April 2018. Recording Secretary Cathy Hasbrouck passed around samples of formats available for printed copies of the chapters using Microsoft Word's change control option and asked the Commissioners which format they preferred. They decided they would like to see the chapters in two formats. One with no notations about changes, simply showing the current version of the document, and the second showing the changes and a panel to the left of the text which made room for notes.

Reviewing the list of tasks under item 1, it was decided to add four months to tasks b through h. Items 2 and 3 were not changed.

Naomi Johnson said she had decided to look at a report drafted by a friend for the Baltimore School Board and to read various newspaper accounts and draft a section about the impact of Act 48 on the Chester school boards.

Agenda Item 6, Update on recent energy survey

Recording Secretary Cathy Hasbrouck said there have been about 350 replies. The responses have been entered into a spreadsheet. She has not yet collected the comments written on some of the forms. Phil Perlah asked if the results of the survey will be released to the press. Naomi Johnson said it was a matter of public record and will be released when it is compiled.

In an aside, Barre Pinske said he found Brandy Saxton's comments about setbacks being more flexible and reflecting the setbacks of lots around the property in question to be very encouraging and asked the Commission members to consider the suggestion.

Julie Hance said the Village Center designation must be renewed this July and she would be coming to the Planning Commission in June to get the application prepared.

Claudio Veliz asked if the current Zoning District map could have detail added to it which included information about buildings and their uses. Julie Hance suggested this would be a good workshop exercise.

The date for the next meeting will be April 2, 2018.

Barre Pinske moved to adjourn the meeting. Tim Roper seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.