



Town of Mount Holly Planning Commission

Town Office & Remote Electronic – Special Work Meeting Minutes

Wednesday March 2, 2022

6:00 P.M.

Commission Members Present: Jon McCann (Chair), Jim Seward (Vice Chair), Andrew Schulz (Secretary), Brigid Sullivan

Commission Members Absent: Andrew Seward

Also Present: Renee Sarmiento (Clerk), Stephen Michel, Donna Seward

1. Jon called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.
2. No changes to agenda.
3. Town Plan Revisions
 - a. Facilities and Utilities
 - i. The chair reported that the rescue letter has not been received.
 - ii. Commissioner Sullivan questioned if Fire is still working on their response. Stephen Michel commented that they have met on it and completed an outline of points they would like to cover.
 - iii. Commissioner Sullivan noticed the tower has one set of receptors, but it does not seem to be working yet. The Chair stated they had heard it would not be operational until 2nd quarter.
 - iv. The Chair reported he has not received a response from GMP, but he will follow-up.
 - v. The Chair mentioned that some towns, including Shrewsbury and Poultney, put education under the facilities and utilities section of their town plans.
 - b. Education Plan
 - i. The Chair reported he has not been able to speak with the MHS Principal yet (perhaps due to school break last week). It would be good to come up with questions for him.
 - ii. The Chair mentioned there is useful information in the annual school report.
 - iii. The Commission reviewed the state requirements for the Education Plan: “An educational facilities plan consisting of a map and statement of present and projected uses and the local public-school system.” Discussion of whether it might go under the facilities section of the plan.
 - iv. Discussion of whether valuable services like “Rainbow Riding Center” fall under Education. Commissioner Sullivan noted it could potentially be put in a section for Social Services. Commission Schulz suggested putting it in the category that seems most appropriate, and also cross-reference it in other relevant categories. The Chair stated it might be worth having a Social Services subcategory under Utilities and Facilities.
 - v. Commissioner Schulz inquired if the categories or chapters of the plan are fixed, and if Education is separate from other services. He suggested that there could be a category of “Education and Social Services”, and Facilities and Utilities would be more “health and safety”. The Chair responded that the categories are not fixed. The statute (24 V.S.A. § 4382) requires 12 categories that are required to be addressed each with a list of details that have to be included, but it is understood that the Town can organize the Plan however we wish. Education and Social Services could also include childcare and eldercare. The Chair noted that the childcare situation is poor with few, if any, options.
 - vi. Commissioner Sullivan stated there is a group of homeschooling parents in town, but she is unsure of who organizes it. Suggested as a question for MHS Principal.

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- vii. Review of Middle School and High School options. Will probably want to mention the options in the Plan.
 - viii. Discussion of school choice options: Burr & Burton Academy (public for Manchester, VT), Mount Saint Joseph Academy catholic school in Rutland, Okemo Mountain School, Expeditionary School at Black River, Long Trail School, Mill River, River Valley Technical (Springfield), Stafford Technical School (Rutland)
 - ix. It was suggested the Chair could speak with Andrea Auld, PTSA
 - x. Discussion of education related bussing. Mention of a bus stop change due to blocking entrance to Fire/Rescue. Thoughts about having an actual bus stop. Wondered if this is a question for Devon and the Transportation Plan. Anecdotes that ridership on elementary school bus is low.
 - xi. Discussion about virtual learning. Mention of VTVLC -The Vermont Learning Cooperative (online courses for middle and high school students) and Two Rivers Virtual Learning Academy. The Chair will ask the MHS Principal about virtual learning.
 - xii. The Chair asked if there was anything in other Towns' Plans that the Commission might want to explore. The Chair recalled speaking with MHS Principal last year, and that it seemed that the cost of living and housing were significant issues so there will almost certainly be a relationship between education plan and the housing plan. Commissioner Schulz expressed dissatisfaction that when it comes to education so much depends on the number of students and the declining number of students, and there is not much that can be done about it in the short term. Commissioner Sullivan stated that as the Commission looks at the Housing Plan they need to be cognizant of when housing isn't available there are fewer families and students so it definitely impacts the school.
 - xiii. Review of who to reach out to for information: Andrea Auld (PTSA) and Craig Hutt Vater (MHS Principal). Commissioner Schulz suggested seeking input from a school board member.
 - xiv. Commissioner Schulz asked if there is any data or anecdotal stories about how the influx of people to Vermont and the housing crisis is changing the demographics of our community. Are people coming with school age children, or is it mostly older wealthier people without children? Commissioner Jim Seward stated he thought it was a little of both. Stephen Michel noted how the grade school is up to 110-115 students with a capacity for 125. Commissioner Sullivan asked if the US Census would have data. The Chair spoke about how the Poultney Town Plan referenced a 2018 American Community Survey that the Commission should look at. This was about certain demographic trends for education. The Chair stated they had tried to figure out information about growth trends as required for the local hazard mitigation plan, but weren't able to get clear answers. The Listers could have information about the rate of housing transfers, but may not know if they are residents or have children. Commissioner Sullivan said the school gets information about what children will be coming in future years, so Raye Lin, school secretary, knows the births in town. Commissioner Schulz wondered if local brokers would have information about who has bought and what the demographics look like. The Chair noted this information will probably be needed for the housing plan.
 - xv. Possible questions for Principal Craig Hutt Vater: How does he project what his future enrollments will be? What challenges are there? Same kind of questions that have been asked in previous sections (i.e. money for repair and maintenance, capital investments, facilities). Kindergarten is five full days and universal preschool is offered part time. Is pre-k only being part time a matter of funding or staffing.
4. Public Comments:
 - a. Conservation Commission (former chair) provided copies of The Inventories of the Mount Holly Commission. Copies were distributed to PC members.
 5. Upcoming meetings

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- a. Public Hearing – March 16th at 6:15 pm
 - b. Regular meeting – March 16th, 7:00 pm (3rd Wednesday)
 - c. Working meeting (Housing) – April 6, 7:00 pm (1st Wednesday)
6. Meeting adjourned at 6:54 pm

For the Commission,
Renee Sarmento

In draft form until approved on March 16th, 2022