



Town of Mount Holly Planning Commission

Town Office & Remote Electronic – Special Work Meeting Minutes

Wednesday September 7, 2022

7:00 P.M.

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

Also Present: Renee Sarmiento (Clerk), Stephen Michel, David Martin, Phil Leonard

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.
2. Changes to agenda
 - a. Added to public comments: mention email sent by Chair with subdivision appeal from 2009.
3. Update on ARPA / MPG
 - a. Commissioner Sullivan reported she received a listing of money that has been spent so far for AARP funds. The Mount Holly Rescue Squad (\$4,279, \$2,802.99 spent), audio visual equipment (\$10,000, none spent), land records digitalization (\$11,800, \$5,590 spent) museum water line (\$3,800, \$3,521.25 spent), Summit road culvert (\$36,000, none spent). Total allocated is \$65,879. They have received two payments a year ago for \$65,115.78 and \$120,816.21. There was another payment received recently for \$65,000, and if VPR reporting correctly should be getting an additional \$300,000. Because it is not here yet David Johnson doesn't track it. In the bank: \$185,000. David expects the \$300,000. Commissioner Sullivan heard that every town was receiving an allocation of X number of dollars per resident and Mount Holly has roughly 1,200 residents. Select Board working on determining next allocations. Commissioner Sullivan received a list of Mount Holly land ownership and capital assets. To be discussed under Section "Others"
 - b. Municipal planning grant update: Last year the Select Board authorized planning grant application in order to look into the best ways to spend ARPA and other grant money that may become available. Select Board recently signed a contract to do community outreach and gather requirements. There will be a number of public meetings and other outreach happening over the next 6-7 months. Contractor is Melissa Levy with Community Roots LLC.
4. Town Plan Revisions
 - a. Utility and Facility Plan
 - i. Recreation Plan
 1. David Martin spoke about the inventory of recreation resources in town. Have not gotten to the next stage of saying what should be done with the list other than the idea it might be useful in creating a guide of where to go for recreation. They had not gotten to point of discussing what should be developed. David shared his personal ideas of ice skating and having a part-time recreation director. Phil Leonard added that the town has a recreation area at the tip of Star Lake, and he would like to see further development of recreation activities there. David spoke about pool in Chester and how their pool has a lifeguard on duty. Idea of town considering this for Star Lake. Commissioner Schulz asked if the Conservation Commission plans on

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making suggestions of what should be developed. David stated the Commission is still relatively new and first step was to develop inventories. As a Commission just beginning to think of what the next step is. David personally hopes they would develop recommendations for the Select Board and Planning Commission.

2. Commissioner Sullivan suggested adding swimming at Buttermilk Falls, Camp Plymouth State Park, private ponds to the list. Commissioner Schulz asked if it was appropriate to list activities not in Mount Holly. Commissioner Sullivan suggested adding a section of available nearby recreation. Chair stated the Planning Commission is interested in taking the list and bringing it into the Town Plan. Town Plan has a recreation component as part of the Utilities and Facilities plan. Most sections have three components - inventory, set of goals, set of actions. Chair would like to see Commission take list as inventory and then decide what is wanted for goals and actions. Chair stated in addition, it would be nice to have a recreation guide or chamber of commerce type pamphlet. That would likely include nearby opportunities, but for Town Plan likely would want specific opportunities in or accessed from Mount Holly. Chair added that a town plan could establish policies around recreation such as suggesting formation of an advisory recreation committee. Unsure what statutory committee creates those committees. In some towns they are standing committees of the Select Board. Might be beneficial and would not cost the town money. Committees are usually advisory to the Select Board and Planning Commission. Commissioner Schulz stated the identification and framing of goals will be affected by opportunities nearby. For example, bike trail across town line, would not propose a bike trail in the town. What is nearby can guide what Mount Holly wants to do as a town and not duplicating something nearby. Commissioner Sullivan gave example of softball league in Ludlow. Commissioner Sullivan likes the idea of Conservation Commission offering recommendations. David Martin is personally hoping Conservation Commission takes the next step to create goals. David suggested Planning Commission send in a reminder of current and past requests to the Conservation Commission. Stephen Michel spoke about additional nearby opportunities including back country motorcycle trail dirt bikes that come into the area on Cole Road, and swimming/ice skating rink at Jackson Gore.
3. Chair asked if David Martin knew what the official policy is for use of the school facilities. David stated use is okay outside of school hours. This also likely means outside of afterschool hours (after 5pm). David will confirm.
4. Chair passed around printed copies of other town plan recreation sections for Planning Commission to review goals (Weston, Wallingford, Shrewsbury).
5. Commission discussed hiking in Green Mountain Forest and lack of access. Chair shared personal opinion that town should be asking the federal government to expand access options (parking areas/entrance options) to the national forest. There may be an opportunity to do that this year because of the West River timber sale. Chair stated that in addition to making public lands more accessible to the public there is a public safety concern as well. Well established trailheads and parking areas are stored in the E911 location database for use by first responders.

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6. Commissioner Sullivan spoke to cons of having places well known, such as overcrowding and overuse. Commissioner Schulz stated it is important to identify why making certain things goals in the Town Plan. For example, make more opportunities for residents, attract tourists, or attract new residents. Depending on the objective, it may frame what we want to or not develop. Goal could be to better identify and mark trailheads and create parking spaces. This does not necessarily mean advertising them at the chamber of commerce. Commissioner Andrew Seward stated he thinks everyone should be able to use them, but if want any sort of monies to go to parking town should try to get the money from the state forest or federal monies. Commissioner J. Seward spoke about parking and trail options that he is able to think of. Chair stated Mount Holly does have the benefit of snowmobile parking, but this is all the parking we have. They are there because of the VAST system. Commissioner Sullivan suggested finding out how VAST got the parking areas funded. Chair stated VTrans is involved and they are well known to the forest service.
7. Commissioner Schulz commented on goal from the Wallingford Town Plan about controlling invasive species goal and organizing activities around it.
8. Commissioners mentioned the use of neighboring town's facilities, some of which are designated for their residents only. Perhaps there is an opportunity for a formal agreement between the towns so that Mount Holly residents can use those facilities.
9. Chair asked what are things that David Martin thinks are most lacking. David responded that most of recreation is because people know it is there and if it is okay, but if you don't know it is hard to find out. There is a need to figure out where it is okay to be/park before creating a guide. Chair asked about the Proctor Hill trail and if it should be added to the list of hiking trails? Chair stated there is a nice set of trail maps for Nineveh Foundation lands. Commissioner Schulz suggested Chair reach out to Kelly Beerman. One issue is that the trails are used by campers in the summer.
10. Chair asked if there was interest in making recommendation to make a committee looking at recreation. David stated they haven't talked about it as a commission but he would support the idea. Commissioner asked about the benefit of having a new committee vs. the Conservation Commission. David stated a commission may have higher visibility and attract people willing to do a little work. Chair stated it would attract people primarily interested in recreation and perhaps involved in the school. Commissioner Andrew Seward suggested if this occurs that there be some wording that Federal/state grants should be primarily funding recreation.
11. Chair stated he would like to explore better trail access and parking for National Forest. The Okemo State Forest is not too bad, has some parking access areas. Hopefully more State Forest access through Weston next year.
12. Chair asked if they considered how some towns have a municipal forest designated partly for recreation. David stated he has not looked into this. Chair stated there are a quite a few of good examples of this around the area. Can make it known the town would be open to this by putting it in the Town Plan.

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13. Commissioner Schulz stated it would be helpful for Conservation Commission to identify things they feel are worthy of further consideration. This could aid Planning Commission's task of identifying goals in the Town Plan. Constraints would like to begin drafting text in next couple months. Conservation Commission will discuss at meeting and bring back to next Planning Commission Special meeting re: goal and action item suggestions.
- b. Others...
 - i. Inventory of town assets required in the Town Plan. Treasurer David provided a list of the real estate that the town owns (boat access, triangle in village, school, town garage, two fire houses, rescue garage, salt shed garage/highway department, island in Star Lake, Lake front, old garage site, town hall pad, library, town well, transfer station)
 - ii. Should also include Town equipment list and Cemeteries list
5. Public comments:
 - i. Chair spoke about the subdivision appeal before the Environmental Court in 2009. The Town's decision was not overturned. The Chair just got a copy of the court docket record and distributed it in email. Planning Commission discussed the Wasilewski subdivision decision and conditions. Chair said it underscores the importance of written decisions including findings of fact and conclusions of law in order to save the town from costly legal disputes. Chair added that a "writing land use decisions" training from the Superior Court Environmental Division he attended in 2020 also made that point clear.
6. Upcoming meetings
 - a. Regular meeting – September 21, 2022 (subdivision application add state highways guidance)
 - b. Special Meeting - October 5, 2022 (recreation and land use)
7. Meeting adjourned at 8:34pm

For the Commission,
Renee Sarmiento, Clerk

In draft form until approved on August 17, 2022