



Town of Mount Holly Planning Commission

Town Office & Remote Electronic – Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday January 18, 2023

7:00 P.M.

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

Also Present: Renee Sarmiento (Clerk), Ethan Pepin

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.
2. Changes to agenda: Section 7 moved up before section 6
3. Approval of minutes
 - a. December 21, 2022 regular meeting were approved as distributed.
4. Reports & Announcements
 - a. Administrative Officer: none
 - b. Planning Commission Chair
 - i. Chair gave update on Select Board decision to set next hearing for the proposed bylaw, but the date may be changed.
 - ii. Chair presented to the Select Board the job descriptions and suggested fee schedule. Nothing was decided, Select Board will think about it.
 - iii. State took ownership of land in Mount Holly and Weston that was conserved by the Mount Holly Conservation Trust known as the Doolittle Land. It will be a Wildlife Management Area and be open to hiking and hunting.
5. Correspondence
 - a. Subdivision proposals: None
 - b. Building Construction Registrations
 - i. Carlucci, 2535 Hedgehog Hill Rd North, new structure (3 bedrooms 2 1/2 baths) - AO will verify address on the Building Construction form.
 - c. Wastewater system and potable water supply permits: None
 - d. Email / Other:
6. New business
 - a. Administrative Officer position
 - i. Chair spoke about the Administrative Officer's intent to resign. The AO has agreed to stay on until a new candidate is appointed. Planning Commission responsibility to nominate an individual.
 - ii. Job description has been created. Select Board was asked but did not have opinion about whether regular office hours are needed. Commissioner Jim Seward stated there should be office hours added. and suggested the Commission modify the job description. The Chair suggested adding "Hold regular office hours at least one hour per week" to the job requirements. Commissioner Sullivan made a motion to approve AO job description with the Chair's suggestion. Commissioner A. Seward seconded the motion. **Unanimously approved.**
 - iii. **Agreed** to place ad for position into Chitchat and Newsflash.
 - iv. Discussion about advertising both AO and Clerk positions. Due to the number of hours available it is likely that someone would be interested in holding both positions.

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- v. Discussion about content of the ad.
 - vi. Will ask for applicants to email letters of interest, and then look at candidates at next regular meeting.
7. Unfinished business
- a. Transportation Plan (guest Ethan Pepin)
 - i. Ethan provided a paper copy of the initial draft to those present at the meeting. He reviewed each section in detail with the Commission.
 - ii. Discussion about the necessity of specificity.
 - iii. Discussed characterizing current conditions, creating a 10-year paving plan, and doing rolling plan updates.
 - iv. Discussed importance of mentioning specific projects. Grant applications get 10 bonus points if mentioned in a Town Plan.
 - v. Discussion of storm water infrastructure. Jeff Chase stated the system in Belmont is currently failing. Chair will share stormwater map of Belmont.
 - vi. Discussion about policies and scenic roads.
 - vii. Chair stated the importance of having a set of policies in the Town Plan so we have some local say in how the State reviews any Act 250 project. Chair stated that he would like to have policies and actions for each chapter.
 - viii. Commissioner Jim Seward spoke about a messy situation in the past in which a road was created and multiple structures were built and was an Act 250 review. The Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department (MHVFD) determined they were unable to provide service because the road was not designed to be accessible. A clearer and more specific Town Plan might have guided the project better and communicated the requirement for emergency services access. Commissioner Andrew Seward asked if there is detail in the transportation section of the Town Plan that say how driveways/roads are constructed. Chair suggested the plan could refer to or suggest driveway development standards or guidelines, that the town should develop. Chair said MHVFD recently adopted Recommended Development Standards that could be used.
 - ix. Ethan suggested adding a section related to Act 171 habitat and wildlife crossings. There is increasing focus by the state and ANR on looking at wildlife crossings and how to integrate those into existing projects. State has a map of where they have identified high priority wildlife crossing zones. So, if there is interest there could be a section on identifying assets in high priority zones and when those zones come up for replacement since they are noted as high priority crossing zones. Can look to see if ANR will support. More and more grants/money being available for that. Ethan stated they could download the state level data set and grab all the structures that are in the high priority zone.
 - x. Chair stated he would like to see aquatic organism passage (AOP) considered in bridge and culvert assessment and replacement. AOP helps to enhance fishing among other things. Ethan stated he did not include it because he thought MRGP standards make it pretty hard to build without AOP these days, whatever project you are doing. Chair stated he would like to see it spelled out as a goal for all non-trivial culverts (perennial streams) to have AOP.
 - xi. Chair is interested to know if large (>3 feet) culverts are used for wildlife crossing. For example, make it specific, there is a 48-inch culvert under Route 103 in a high-pressure wildlife crossing area. Chair tried to speak to Fish and Wildlife about putting a camera there to find out. Commission could put a mark on the transportation plan that stated that is an animal crossing area. Ethan stated it is good to emphasize the preservation of the natural resources help hunting and fishing.
 - xii. Commissioner Sullivan asked about bike paths. Ludlow is beginning to develop one now. Chair and Commissioner A. Seward agreed this would go under recreation. Commissioner

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Sullivan stated the highway department has bike path money. Commissioners will look into it.

- xiii. Chair reminded Commission about memo from the State related to helipads.
 - xiv. Ethan gave update on the crash data confusion at a past meeting. Where things were left was that Commission disputed the numbers of accidents recorded for the “blinking light” intersection. It was the Commission’s opinion that the numbers are actually far higher. Ethan and the Chair looked into the situation. Ethan stated the issue is the way the incidents were reported by Vermont State Police. Each successive incident was appended to a previous one instead of creating a new ID. Ethan stated he still does not believe the area rises to the level of a priority in the eyes of the State as a high crash intersection.
 - xv. Chair distributed a “heat map” of crashes on Route 103. It clearly shows the blinking light and Healdville near Harry’s are the most dangerous intersections. Ethan said Mount Holly could petition VTrans to look at the intersection. Chair pointed out the importance of accurate crash numbers and incidents being reported correctly. State statistics directly impact the work VTrans will do.
 - xvi. Ethan will create a new draft with the changes and send it to the Chair for discussion at meeting next month.
8. Public Comments: None.
9. Upcoming meetings
- a. Special Meeting - Land use February 1st at 7:00pm (1st Wednesday) Brigid will be absent.
 - b. Regular meeting - February 15th at 7:00 pm (3rd Wednesday)
10. Meeting adjourned at 8:57pm

For the Commission,
Renee Sarmento, Planning Commission Clerk.

In draft form until approved on February 15, 2023