



Town of Mount Holly Planning Commission

Town Office & Remote Electronic – Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 5, 2023

7:00 P.M.

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

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm
2. Changes to agenda: None
3. Unfinished business:
 - a. Status of proposed bylaw: The Chair reported that the Select Board did not take action at the March 29 public hearing on the proposed amendment to the Flood Hazard Area bylaw. A fact sheet will be mailed to residents with the dog tag reminder, with the intention of the Select Board voting in May. The Chair had called many residents in advance of the public hearing, and over 20 letters of support were received. The state's representative, who attended the public hearing, reported that's the most support he's ever seen. The bylaw will be effective 45 days after it is adopted by the Select Board.
 - b. Town Plan: The focus of this meeting is on the Transportation section, not Land Use as previously anticipated. A draft had been circulated via email over the weekend, and the Chair brought copies of a revised draft with a few more changes.
 - i. The earlier draft from RRPC tacks all action items and policies onto the end of the chapter. The Chair believes they are better placed in the various sections of the plan to which they each pertain. This is how Manchester did it in their plan. Action items for the town are italicized and indented to distinguish them. Policies are stated in the paragraph and are not set apart via formatting.
 - ii. The Chair noted that the current draft adds a section on rails. Discussion ensued about the fall foliage train and potential economic opportunities associated with having a stop at Mount Holly.
 - iii. The current draft also includes a statement about natural screening and constructed barriers along highways to dampen traffic noise. Discussion ensued about constructed barriers and their potential unsightliness and risk to wildlife. The Chair noted that they can be constructed from natural materials, like rocks, and that they do not need to be more than a few feet tall to make a big difference. Possible additional language was discussed. Stretches of highway where noise abatement is most useful include the "flats" and near Summit. The directive that the town coordinate with VTrans and RRPC was reviewed.

- iv. Invasive plants: The Commissioners discussed the wording of the section on managing invasive plants through mowing and other Best Management Practices. The timing of mowing is key, and if it can't be done at the right time then other methods should be used. It was agreed that it is important to maintain flexibility as the best practices may evolve over time. The current draft specifically identifies several really bad plants because they are priorities due to their toxic nature.
- v. Emerald Ash Borer: The Commissioners discussed the desirability of identifying treatment as an option. It was agreed that treatment should be identified as an option, but not in the Transportation section. Ash trees in the town highway right-of-way should be removed, not treated, because they represent a potential hazard that may be too much for the road crew to handle if they all die at the same time. Also, if the infestation is heavy there may be a supply shortage of private contractors available because every town will need them.
- vi. Bridges: There are currently three bridges that are problems.
 - 1. The old Rt. 103 bridge near Buttermilk Falls is part of the Catamount trail network and allows pedestrian access to Buttermilk Falls. This is a high and long concrete bridge, and is in poor condition. The state asserts that the town owns the bridge, and there is some evidence in the land records to support that position. However, the Chair reports that State may be interested in talking with the Town about the bridge's future.
 - 2. The Station Road bridge is part of the VAST trail network, and provides pedestrian access to the Healdville trail up Okemo. There has been interest in bringing it back into service. Its condition is unknown, and it may have moved following tropical storm Irene. It may also be constraining the stream, which would present additional constraints on bringing it back into service. Commissioner Andrew Seward agreed to investigate if documentation of the status and decommissioning of the bridge exists.
 - 3. The Greendale Road bridge: The town owns the bridge, but not what's beyond it. Mostly Green Mountain National Forest on the other side, though there is one private landowner. The road on the other side of the bridge is not a town road. The Commissioners discussed various options, including the possibility of giving it up, or getting the Forest Service to repair/maintain it.
- vii. Road glare and streetlights: The Commissioners discussed these problems, and noted in particular that there are only three streetlights in the town, one by Harry's, one by the Odd Fellows hall, and one in the intersection in Belmont. More street lights could seriously damage the rural character of our community.
- viii. Parking and park & rides: There are no state-designated parking areas or bus stops. There are places where The Bus stops, but there is no signage.

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A bus stop with appropriate signage should be created on Rt. 103 at Sawyer Hill Road and/or at Belmont Road.

- ix. The Chair described the need for a grant writer to seek funds for town roads and other purposes. Select Board member Jeff Chase has taken on this role. Commissioner Andrew Seward suggested need for someone to work on more than just road grants. Someone should be hired on a part-time or hourly basis to work with emergency crews, roads, recreation, historic preservation, etc., and seek out appropriate grants. Commissioner Jim Seward suggested that grants usually allow for paying grant writers and administrators through the grant. An effective grant-writer would pay for themselves several times over.
 - x. Road crew personnel: The Commissioners discussed the fact that the current draft says nothing about need for additional road crew staff. This will be considered at a future meeting.
 - xi. Star Lake recreation rules: These rules are posted at beach, but it is unclear if there is an ordinance behind them. Commissioner Andrew Seward agreed to look into it.
 - xii. Cemeteries: The Commissioners discussed the ownership of the cemeteries in the town, and where they should be identified in the town plan.
4. Public comments: None
 5. Upcoming meetings: The next meeting is a Regular Meeting on April 19, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.
 6. Meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

For the Commission,
Andrew Schulz, Planning Commission Secretary

In draft form until approved on April 19, 2023