



Town of Mount Holly Planning Commission

Town Office & Remote Electronic – Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 19, 2023
7:00 P.M.

Commission Members Present: Jon McCann (Chair), Jim Seward (Vice Chair), Brigid Sullivan (via Zoom), Andrew Seward,
Also present: Stephen Michel, Renee Sarmento (Clerk)
Absent: Andrew Schulz

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm
2. Changes to agenda: None
3. Approval of minutes
 - a. The minutes of the special meeting held on March 1st, 2023 and the regular meeting held on March 15, 2023 were approved unanimously.
4. Reports & Announcements
 - a. Administrative Officer: None
 - b. Planning Commission Chair
 - i. Chair attended two trainings: First was on open meeting law. Chair learned all votes, when a member is remote, must be done by roll call. Also learned that when there are remote attendees, supposed to introduce commissioners. Second training: Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP). The state has money for improvements to municipal buildings. Eligible buildings include: town office, fire stations, rescue station, Library, town garage. Commissioner Sullivan asked if the school is eligible. Question of who owns the school building. Mr. Michel stated he believes the supervisory union. The Chair stated he would check.
 - ii. Chair distributed information from Ethan Pepin about a wildlife crossing grant. It would be interesting to capture information for Act 171. Interesting to see if using Buttermilk Falls for recreation would be disruptive for wildlife crossing. Will discuss applying at next month's meeting.
 - iii. Chair asked Dennis Devereux to help draft language related to Odd Fellows and cemeteries.
 - iv. Commissioner Andrew Seward didn't have a chance to look into Station Road bridge and park rules but will before next special meeting.
 - v. Chair shared early news about the workshop for Belmont planning purposes on 5/24/2023 at 5:30 pm in the community center.
5. Correspondence
 - a. Subdivision proposals: None.
 - b. Building Construction Registrations: None.

- c. Wastewater system and potable water supply permits: None.
- d. Email / Other:
 - i. A follow-up conversation with Kris Carter at Green Mountain Power (GMP). One important correction: 3-phase power does not go to Belmont (it goes from E. Wallingford to the substation). Asked GMP about the possibility of getting lines moved to the road in Belmont, and out of the playground. They are open to working with the town if we want to do a charging station in the municipal center. She suggested Commission talk to the Vermont Rail about the possibility of a park-and-ride. Some individuals wanted 3-phase power. It seems unlikely that there will be 3-phase anywhere else in town.
 - ii. Conversation with Shane Filskov at Vermont Railways – there are plans for the lot across from the Post Office so they are not interested in working with the town on a park-and-ride.
 - iii. The Chair connected with VELCO but didn't talk on the phone yet.
 - iv. The Chair began having conversations with some individuals at the school. Will reach out again to the Principal next.
 - v. Regional Planning Commission sent information to the Select Board about what addresses are in river corridors and small streams. Unfortunately, the information was not correct (too many rivers). The Chair was able to get them to correct one of the files but not the other. Only five addresses were affected by small stream corridors in the proposed bylaw.

6. New Business: None

7. Unfinished Business

- a. Town Plan: Land Use
 - i. The Chair sent around a copy of the first draft of the land use chapter.
 - ii. The outline follows the statute and each section starts with a definition.
 - iii. Commissioner Sullivan stated her initial reaction is that it jumped around a bit. For example, recreation comes back a couple of times/is in a couple of different places. The Chair explained that the order follows the statute to make sure everything was covered but changes can be made. Commissioner Sullivan stated she felt some things could be combined.
 - iv. The Chair explained that, unlike previous plans, policies are located in context instead of having them in a numbered list at the end. The Chair asked for comments and suggestions about the layout. Commissioner Sullivan noted that habitat protection and connectivity are in multiple sections.
 - v. The Chair gave credit to Commissioner Schulz for help in drafting the Town Plan.

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- vi. The Chair asked Commissioners if there were factors, action items, policies etc. that should be added.
 - vii. Commissioner Andrew Seward asked about the suggested class 4 roads and trails policies. The Chair explained that, in general, it is not a good idea to give up a public right of way. If it is retained it provides many recreational values to the community and can be reclassified later if needed. The Chair noted that the Transportation chapter draft already has an action item to adopt a class 4 road and trails policy which would include more detail. The Chair added that there are a number of reasons to avoid adding road mileage, such as the ongoing cost, legal, and maintenance burdens. Other obligations include stormwater, MRGP compliance, bridges and culverts replacement and repair, and Act 171 requirements.
 - viii. Commissioner Andrew Seward asked what benefit a town forest would provide. The Chair explained that a town forest could offer improved opportunities to the community for recreation (hiking, walking, etc.) and education. The Chair said that improved outdoor recreational opportunities were noted as important in the recent community survey and would help attract much-needed younger families to the town and provide necessary activities suitable for our older residents. Commissioner Andrew Seward said people should just be able to walk in the National and State forests instead and stated he feels there are currently enough recreational opportunities in the town and further improvements are a waste of assets.
 - ix. Commissioner Andrew Seward said he agreed with most of the Commerce & Industry section but questions “maintain[ing] the open space character.” He asked, if someone wanted to build a large building, would they be discouraged and who decides? The Chair stated the idea is a little bit nuanced but most people seem to agree we don’t want something to appear completely out of character for the community. The recommendation for siting something, in an otherwise rural community, is to do so in a tasteful way. There are ways to design developments that are not overly disruptive to the character of the area. This would be taken into consideration during the Act 250 proceedings.
 - x. Stephen Michel made a comment about two paragraphs saying the same thing (page 15, section 5), and could be combined. Chair will make a note.
 - xi. Stephen Michel asked where settlements could occur in the designated Belmont Village Center? Chair stated that is a valid point that the current Village Center designation is very limited. Commissioner Andrew Seward suggested adding “and surrounding areas”.
8. Public Comments: None
 9. Upcoming meetings
 - a. Working meeting: May 3rd (1st Wednesday)

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- b. Regular meeting: May 17th, at 7:00 pm (3rd Wednesday)

10. Meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm.

For the Commission,
Renee Sarmento, Planning Commission Clerk
In draft form until approved on May 17, 2023