



# Town of Mount Holly Planning Commission

## **Town Office & Remote Electronic – Special Work Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, June 7th, 2023

7:00 P.M.

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

Also Present: Faith Tempest (Clerk), Christine Pratt, James Heald, Lyndsey Glezen, Margaret Glezen, William Greene, Stephen Michel, Donna Seward (Zoom)

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Changes to agenda: None
3. New business
  - a. Discussion of Public Informational (Belmont) Workshop May 24<sup>th</sup>: Chair noted the workshop was to present results of a survey undertaken with funds from a Municipal Planning Grant, to present ideas for a plan for Belmont village prepared by a consultant planner, and to seek feedback from Town residents. The final draft report and plan will be prepared by September. Chair noted that the proposals are preliminary.
    - i. A number of points were made by Commissioners:
      1. Jim Seward noted the proposal for walking trails on private land.
      2. Andrew Seward noted that stormwater proposals would be on town land. Chair confirmed the stormwater system has failed and the Town needs to take action – grants are available for this. A stormwater system may also create recreational opportunities (walking paths). Andrew Seward and Jim Seward noted that any buried utilities should not be in the same location as the stormwater system. Chair noted that burying utilities may create additional space for parking and for the Star Lake recreation area.
      3. Andrew Seward noted that the proposed community septic would require Town action. Chair noted that the details have not been developed, including how many houses it would serve. It could be managed by establishing a fire district (essentially a municipal corporation which could determine how to fund it). As residential septic systems in the village fail, they could join a community system if it exists. Some village residents noted value of this. Chair noted that

the easiest model is to link existing septic tanks to a piped system with a large leach field elsewhere.

4. Jim Seward asked if there was any consideration of fire hydrants in the village during this proposed work? Chair agreed this should be considered.
- ii. Members of the public raised several issues:
1. Christine Pratt and Margaret Glezen asked what the advantage would be in having walking paths through private property and how this would be managed: Chair noted advantages, especially for elderly people, of safe spaces to walk, and there would potentially be better access to the Star Lake recreation area which would be ADA compliant. Chair also noted that there is not yet any detailed plan for such paths. William Greene asked if the Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaw affects the proposals. Chair noted the bylaw has exemptions for recreation and parking.
  2. Christine Pratt asked how these proposals would be funded. Chair noted that ARPA funds allow us to match and unlock federal funds which would allow the Town to undertake these relatively extensive public works. Specifically regarding community septic systems, James Heald noted the example of Mendon where the community septic incurs monthly costs. Commissioner Schulz noted it is also costly to repair/ replace a failed system so potentially economies of scale are better. Stephen Michel suggested that another funding mechanism would be an assessment on the taxes of those on the system. This would also allow the Town to raise funds as opposed to the Fire District. Commissioner Andrew Seward noted that it would then be a burden the town if the system fails.
  3. Commissioner Schulz noted that public questions suggest a concern about the likelihood that all elements of the plan proposals will be implemented. Chair clarified that the ideas presented are based on feedback from the community; the plan itself is intended to enhance access to funding, including grants which require the backing of clear proposals. The Select Board have asked for this work to unlock access to funding to address some of the Town's pressing challenges which have in the past been too expensive to deal with.
- b. Two part VLCT Planning training: Chair noted this training being offered and suggested that it would be useful for Commissioners and members of the Board of Adjustment.
4. Unfinished business:
    - a. Town Plan

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- i. Chair followed up with the School Principal but has not yet received a response to help complete the education section. Chair will follow up with the US Forest Service ranger regarding logging operations, parking, signage, and potential allowed uses for recreation. Chair has not yet had chance to connect with VAST on their trails and confirm that they are happy with the plan. There is no response yet from VELCO about recreational use under their lines, including opening up gates. Commissioner Schulz said he had contacts at VELCO and will share with Chair. Other sections which require more attention are those on historic sites and town government. All the maps are required. Several sections are under review by relevant stakeholders.
  - ii. Timing for approval of Town Plan: Chair proposed that we should plan for a public hearing in September 2023. This timing reflects a number of issues, including the Belmont Village designation which expires in April 2024, and requires an approved Town Plan to renew it. The Village designation gives the Town more likelihood to get grants and access to tax credits for residents/ businesses within the Village.
  - iii. Chair asked Commissioners to consider how the Plan will be used in an Act 250 case. What things would we want the NRB to take a position on, in particular infrastructure issues such as emergency vehicle access. Chair asked Commissioners to review the draft in this context.
5. Public comments: No additional comments.
  6. Upcoming meetings: Regular Planning Commission Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> June
  7. Meeting adjourned at 8.15 pm.

For the Commission,

Faith Tempest (Clerk)

In draft form until approved on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023