

Town Office & Remote Electronic – Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

7:00 P.M.

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

Also present: Faith Tempest (Clerk), Stephen Michel, Donna DeAngelis (Zoom)

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm
2. Changes to agenda: None
3. Approval of minutes
 - a. The minutes of the special meeting held on 7th June, 2023 and the regular meeting held on May 17th, 2023 were approved unanimously.
4. Reports & Announcements
 - a. Administrative Officer
 - i. BCRs have been received from:
 - Blyskal/Gautch
 - Macallam
 - Beleirin
 - Alissa Tilly: Belmont General Store. Retrospective BCR recording the addition of one apartment within the last 10 years
 - Alissa Tilly: Belmont General Store.
 - Alissa Tilly: Okemo View Lane. Constructing a 50'x32' Pavilion. This was discussed at the Select Board meeting and the AO sought a jurisdictional opinion from Quin Mann, NRB District Coordinator. The opinion is that at this time there is no trigger for Act 250 based on Tilly's representation that the pavilion is solely for use by the family. Commissioner Schulz asked what would trigger Act 250. AO confirmed that a change to commercial use would be the trigger.
 - ii. Commissioner Jim Seward asked about another issue raised at the Select Board, a Barn constructed on the same site as the Pavilion, possibly without a BCR. AO noted that this is a historic construction, of which there may be many in the Town. If the Select Board requests, she will seek BCRs for such construction.
 - b. Planning Commission Chair

- i. Chair spoke to USFS district ranger Martina Barnes regarding use of forest roads and trails for recreation. West River Timber Sale is not happening this fall. Forest Service is open to more use of existing trails. Maintenance of trails would require a partnership organization..
 - ii. Chair also spoke to VAST representatives in town (Steve Howlett) and at State level (Matt Tetreault). They are supportive of the draft Town Plan language, and open to all season trails but that will be up to landowners. They are also keen to see the Station Road bridge remain operational in some form; there is less support for Greendale Bridge. Chair noted that VAST will fully fund the appraisal, survey, and legal work if needed if landowners want to permanently protect the trail through their land. Matt recommended establishing a trails committee for the Town, which would make it clear who is responsible for maintenance and to have a single point of contact to call if there are issues regarding a recreational trail.
 - iii. Chair announced that the Okemo Fire Tower has officially been added to the National Historic Lookout Register. This can be noted in the Town Plan.
5. Correspondence
 - a. Subdivision proposals: None.
 - b. Email / Other: None
6. New Business:
 - a. **Village Wastewater Solutions/ Stormwater presentation:** Lynnette Claudon of the VT DEC and project lead for Clean Water State Revolving Fund gave a presentation on Case Studies in Community Wastewater Disposal Systems (presentation available on <https://www.mounthollyvt.org/planning-commission/municipal-planning-grant/>). She noted that many villages lack wastewater solutions and for small villages such as Belmont any solution is likely to be a soil based decentralized system. The DEC has developed affordability metrics to help to determine which options are appropriate. Ms Claudon gave several examples of community systems in Warren, Brownsville, Rochester and Grafton. Case studies suggest annual operating and capital costs per household are around \$1k for conventional septic, \$2k for a mound system, and \$3k for innovative/alternative community-based systems. Commissioner Sullivan asked why, given the cost, people would adopt innovative systems. Ms Claudon noted usually when no permit is possible for any other type of system. Success depends on strong leadership, vision, capacity, funding and affordability. There are two funding opportunities available through DEC – an Engineering Planning Advance (loan), and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (loan). The Engineering Planning Advance does become a grant if there is no construction. Chair asked about use of Fire Districts as part of this process. Ms Claudon noted that usually this happens

after there is agreement to go ahead. Ms Claudon used the DEC maps to consider the specific example of Belmont, possible constraints to locating disposal sites, and possible opportunities. The recommended starting point is a feasibility study which will open opportunities for funding. An engineering study would also be required to move forward. Specific design options would be proposed in a full engineering study. Chair asked for recommendations on how to move forward on this. Ms Claudon noted that a Wastewater committee authorized by the Select Board, could prepare the grant application for the initial studies. She noted that greater success is associated with a committee that includes those living in the service area.

- b. **Update application form for new Flood Hazard and River Corridor bylaw:** Chair had circulated a draft of proposed changes which he noted were to ensure that the form and the ordinance use the same language. He suggested that there is no need for the Clerk to sign for receipt since this is submitted to the AO. Commissioner Jim Seward noted that it is necessary for the Clerk to receive and acknowledge receipt of the fee. Chair will make an adjustment to the form to reflect this. Stephen Michel asked why the PC was proposing these changes and not the Board of Adjustment or the AO. Commissioner Andrew Seward responded that the BoA does not draft bylaws or forms and is only involved in review for conditional use permits, variances, and if there is an appeal of an AO decision. Commissioner Schulz noted that the panel which drafted the bylaw (the PC) should be involved in drafting the application form. The Chair noted that the BoA only has a quasi-judicial role and is not able to draft documents of this type and that historically, and logically, the AO does not draft forms which she is then expected to administer. With the agreed changes, the redesigned form was approved unanimously.
- c. **Review new Act 47:** Chair had sent an email about potential implications of Act 47 passed by the State Legislature in recent weeks. There will be implications for the Commission, and possibly the Town Plan. Since no guidance has been issued, Chair proposed that any discussion is delayed until it is available.
- d. **Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program Grant opportunity:** Ethan Pepin (RRPC Transportation Planner) has suggested that we pursue this grant opportunity. The Mount Holly Conservation Trust is also supportive, but the position of the Conservation Commission is not yet known. Chair suggested that such a grant may be helpful to identify specific actionable outcomes which could address Act 171 requirements, identify whether there are recreation opportunities and would open up opportunities for federal funding. Grant applications are due in the first week of August which may be difficult given the need to have this on the Select Board agenda. Commissioner Sullivan suggested asking the Select Board if they will support it; if they do, then the

Commission could move forward. The Chair supported this approach. Upon motion made and seconded, PC voted to bring this to the Select Board.

7. Unfinished Business

- a. **Station Road Bridge status:** Select Board minutes don't indicate an official process to close the bridge. Chair will solicit input from VAST on possible designs.
- b. **Research Star Lake Recreation Area rules:** Commissioner Sullivan noted that the Belmont Improvement Society set the rules approximately 40 years ago; when the Society was dissolved, the Recreation Area was handed to the Town. Archives of the Belmont Improvement Society are possibly in the Library and may give some clarity on the validity of the rules.
- c. **Town Plan list of maps needed:** Chair has proposed a list of maps based on the specifics of the Town Plan. Chair proposed dropping the current land use map; Commissioner Sullivan suggested it is helpful for comparison with future use. Chair noted that it is difficult to characterize current use and it is unclear what it means. Chair will review other Town Plans for what is included in current land use maps for later consideration. The current proposal is to include Future Land Use, Transportation, Utilities and Facilities, Wildlife Habitat, Forest Blocks and Connectors, the Village Center, and Landforms and Elevation. Unanimously agreed on the proposed list of maps.

8. Public Comments: None.

9. Upcoming meetings

- a. Special meeting: 5th July 7pm
- b. Regular meeting: 19th July 7pm

10. Meeting adjourned at 8:59pm.

For the Commission,

Faith Tempest, Planning Commission Clerk

In draft form until approved on 19th July, 2023