



Town of Mount Holly Planning Commission

Town Office & Remote Electronic – Special Work Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 2nd, 2023

7:00 P.M.

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

Also Present: Faith Tempest (Clerk)

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7:08pm.
2. Changes to agenda: None
3. Unfinished business:
 - a. Town Plan text: Chair introduced further changes to text of the Town Plan in the Education section. He had been able to speak to the School Principal to add additional information on school choice, the new bicycle track and the School's desire for more trails. Chair suggested that the town and School work with the local snowmobile club to consider the possibility of some kind of shared path. The School needs more space and is contemplating a renovation that would involve moving the playground equipment. Currently the playground equipment and school grounds are not open to the public during school hours. There may be opportunities when relocating the playground to allow more public access to it. There is also some encroachment by the School on neighboring private land which will need to be addressed in the longer term. The contamination of the School water supply means that the School needs to access water from the Town Garage, but work is still to be completed and may require additional testing to meet public water supply requirements. Chair will contact the facilities supervisor to clarify what is required to improve the supply. Commissioner Andrew Seward suggested that enrolment data in recent years be included in the Town Plan. The School is also an emergency shelter, but does not have all the necessary equipment, in particular an emergency power supply, and may need investments to fulfill this role. Commissioner Andrew Seward commented that additional school costs may accrue to Town taxpayers; the Chair noted that there are grants available for some items, including backup power systems. The Principal did note that the School has had difficulty recruiting positions due to the limited housing availability. In the Town Plan section on Historic Sites, more was added on specific residences in the Town which are on the National Historic Register. Chair noted other sections have been added to the Plan including an inventory of significant natural features. Chair will share the draft of the plan with Fish and Wildlife for their comments.

- b. The list of Town Plan Maps is now agreed and most of the maps have been prepared or drafted, except future land use. Chair had shared with Commission members the proposed maps of current land use and of wildlife habitat. The map of current land use shows residences, properties in the current use program, (i.e. properties with at least 25 acres in productive use), State lands and conserved lands. Chair asked if there should be more information; Clerk suggested businesses, but Chair noted that there is not an up to date inventory of such information, though he will try to work with the Town Clerk to update the E911 data. We will need to have more accurate E911 data going forward. Chair also noted that in the next plan it may be useful to add information on different housing types e.g. rentals, multi-family dwellings etc. Commissioner Schulz asked if the map title be changed to make it clearer that the map does not show how the land is being used today since it is limited to only a use value program map. Commissioner Sullivan also noted that the map shows in the main the lands that are currently kept in trust for productive use, but little else. Commissioner Andrew Seward suggested that properties in productive agriculture but not in the current use program could be identified through the FSA. The map of wildlife habitat and connectivity shows the degree of priority that the State attaches to wildlife habitat blocks and corridors. The National Forest and adjoining areas are the highest priority wildlife habitat and although the Forest is conserved, private property within this area would be a high priority for conservation. Lower priority areas within the Town may be more subject to fragmentation. Chair noted that this information is used in Act 248 proceedings for solar energy siting. Chair proposed that it is better to use the data from the State; the existing 2018 Town Plan also uses this data set. The map also shows wildlife corridors identified in the Arrowwood study. Commissioner Sullivan noted that the State is currently trying to update and ground truth some related data. Chair asked if any changes should be made; Commissioners Andrew Seward and Andy Schulz asked for the legend to be clearer in terms of what the priority/value is of the identified blocks.

4. Public comments: None
5. Upcoming meetings: Regular Planning Commission meeting, 16th August 2023, 7pm
6. Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm

For the Commission,

Faith Tempest (Clerk)

In draft form until approved on August 16th, 2023