

TOWN OF ESSEX
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
July 28, 2022

Note: *This meeting was in-person and virtual on Teams.

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT:

VIRTUAL: Dustin Bruso, PC Chair; Josh Knox, Vice-Chair; and Tom Furland

IN PERSON: Jonathan Schumacher; and Patty Davis

OTHERS PRESENT:

VIRTUAL: Katherine Sonnick, Community Development Director; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Jean O'Sullivan, Economic Development Coordinator; Matt Boulanger, Williston Planning Director; and Community TV.

IN PERSON: Darren Schibler, Planner; Ken Signorello; Michael Petersen; Paula Duke and Sally Fleury.

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. Chairman Bruso called out the Commissioners present, both virtually and in the room.

AGENDA ITEM 1: ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Continued to next meeting when all Commissioners were present.

AGENDA ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS: Sharon Kelley noted for the record of an email Peter Parkinson sent for PC consideration regarding uses to be added to the family-owned lands in Fort Ethan Allen. Kelley reported that Mr. Parkinson was not sure he would be able to attend the meeting this evening.

AGENDA ITEM 3: TAFT CORNERS FORM-BASED CODE PRESENTATION:

Matt Boulanger, Williston Planning & Zoning Director provided an overview of its amendments to Town's Unified Development Bylaw that replaced most zoning requirements in the Taft Corners Growth Center with a Form-Based Code (FBC) Overlay District. Boulanger noted that the Town of Williston has struggled with Taft Corners for several years, noting that development played out with big box stores and the second wave of development was mixed-use residential. In 2017, they continued to monitor Taft Corners and consider Form Based Codes and develop a downtown. They partnered with CCRPC to develop a strong case to go before the Selectboard and was successful. In January 2021, they warned a Public Hearing to adopt FBC for the Taft Corners Growth Center and to establish an Official Map for all of Williston. He spoke about the following points regarding FBC and the process:

- A Regulating Plan that specifies the location and type of new streets, bike paths, public parks, and green spaces to be constructed and dedicated as a requirement of new development in Taft Corners. The Plan also establishes parking setbacks and building build-to lines.
- Architectural Standards intended to result in construction that is simple and functional, includes sustainable elements, and that will result in quality development that uses

49 durable materials and design, the application of which creates a cohesive ensemble of
50 buildings within Taft Corners.

- 51 • Building Form Standards that establish the rules for development and redevelopment on
52 private lots. They work through form and function controls on building frontages to
53 frame the street-space and foster a vital public realm.

- 54 • Public Realm Standards designed to establish environments within Taft Corners that
55 encourage and facilitate pedestrian and bicycle activity by creating streets and other parts
56 of the public realm that are comfortable, efficient, safe, and interesting.

- 57 • An Amended Zoning Map showing the boundaries of the Form-Based Code District.

- 58 • A Town-wide Official Map showing planned public streets, paths, trails, green spaces and
59 facilities within and outside of the Form-Based Code overlay District. Within the Form
60 Based Code district the Official Map is the same as the Form Based Code Regulating
61 Plan.

62
63 Back and forth discussions included the struggle of FBC; how the public received the proposal;
64 challenges for building height and affordable housing; questioned if developers accepted the new
65 paradigm; the Official Map being a “wish list”; when streets were required to be built; how to
66 manage a build-out for streetscape; and who paid for the infrastructure, etc.

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68 **AGENDA ITEM 4: PLANNING SESSION:** Postponed to next planning schedule.

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70 **AGENDA ITEM 5: MINUTES 7/14/2022:**

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72 **Commissioner Schumacher MOVED and Commissioner Davis SECONDED a MOTION to**
73 **approve the 7/14/2022 minutes as written. The MOTION passed 5-0.**

74
75 **AGENDA ITEM 6: APPROVAL OF PC OPERATING PROCEDURES:** Continued to
76 next meeting when all Commissioners were present.

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78 **AGENDA ITEM 7: OTHER BUSINESS**

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80 Sharon Kelley reported that an application was submitted for an additional mini-warehouse
81 building at 220 Colchester Road, owned by Marcel LeClair who lives on the premises. Kelley
82 planned to process the application as a consent agenda item.

83
84 Vice-Chair Knox reported that he recently met with a couple of work group committees
85 regarding amendments to the zoning regulations. He reported that all the work groups need to
86 start out with reading the materials that have been provided. He noted that the PC will need to
87 fill the work groups that former Commissioner Daly was assigned. Knox reiterated that he
88 wanted the process to be done incrementally.

89
90 Katherine Sonnick noted that bringing information to the public is always good. She noted that
91 the process started with instruction to the staff to step back, however she wanted the PC to
92 know that they can call on staff at any time for assistance.

93
94 After a brief discussion on the PC process and when to reengage public involvement, Chairman

Bruso stated that they first wanted to get information from the work groups. Bruso noted that the PC may or may not agree with suggestions put forth from the working groups. In response to an inquiry, Bruso noted that there would be a lot of time and opportunity for public involvement and comments.

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

By: _____
Dustin R. Bruso, Chair