

TOWN OF ESSEX
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
January 26, 2023

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT:

IN PERSON: Dustin Bruso, Chair; David Raphael; Jonathan Schumacher; Tom Furland and Patty Davis.

VIRTUAL: John Mangan, Clerk.

OTHERS PRESENT:

IN PERSON: Katherine Sonnick, Community Development Director; Kent Johnson, Planner; Aaron Martin, PW Director; and Community Television.

VIRTUAL: Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; and Amanda Froechle.

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. Chairman Bruso requested that amended Agenda items be noted in red. He reported as there is not a public hearing, there was no need to provide the oath to the public.

AGENDA ITEM 1: Public Comments: None.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Capital Budget: Aaron Martin informed the PC that he worked with Katherine Sonnick, Finance Director Dan Roy and Town Manager Greg Duggan on the budget and they decided on a different approach with the presentation. Martin stated that it was a rough year with the budget as the Town lost 41% of its tax base, and the costs have not gone away. Martin stated that the budget will be backfilled with approximately Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$300,000.00) with the reserved funds and the 2-cents collected brings the amount to approximately Three Hundred Twenty-Two Thousand Dollars (\$322,000.00) and this will meet the needs of a couple of items, namely water and stormwater.

Chairman Bruso stated that from his perspective and maybe that of other PC members, is the interest in budget items that affect PC projects, such as water, sewer and roads. Martin stated that infrastructure falls under capital projects and are under the water and sewer budget. Martin believed that the PC should be provided this information and he will bring it to the PC in the future. He noted that his targets for tonight's meeting were highways, stormwater and trails. Martin stated they are working with CCRPC to come up with a pavement index, rank and rate. They requested \$160,000, was granted \$105,000, however made up the difference with some of the operating funds.

Martin discussed the Stormwater needs, noting that flow restoration and phosphorus is identified in the capital plan. He noted they just finished a project with the Village. He stated that LDS needs a retrofit in 2025, which will cost a couple of million dollars. He noted that there is nothing in the budget for upgrade or repairs, which will be a big hit in the future.

Martin reported that they had to take money from roads so start a fix under the roads before they can get to the roads themselves. Again, there is no money in the capital funds.

Commissioner Davis asked if the Town needs to increase the capital tax to 3.5%, noting that everyone is going to demand fixes, and noting the money won't need to be taken out of the operating fund.

Katherine Sonnick reported that staff has recommended 3.5 cents. Martin stated they agreed, as a team and it will be up to the Selectboard.

Commissioner Furland asked if anybody thought of vegetation that will produce phosphorus with development. Martin stated that it was a great idea, is very hard to maintain and they don't have enough bodies.

Chairman Bruso asked if different landscape guidelines would help. Commissioner Furland said yes. Commissioner Raphael stated that new development must meet the State level of TMDL. Sonnick asked if the Zoning Regulations can be improved to make this issue better. Martin said, "doing your part and providing education" even for smaller developments without infrastructure. Chairman Bruso asked Martin where the PC can work better to assist in Public Work's goals. Martin replied that the PC should incorporate the Town Specs so that both documents have the same requirements. Martin noted he will be updating the PW Specs this year.

Commissioner Davis reported that her husband believes the Town should maintain what we have before building more. She reported that Allen Martin sidewalks are not plowed, trees were cut and a path put down, but the roots are coming up from the pavement; she cringes at the blinking lights on Allen Martin; and she reported that she and her husband put in \$55,000.00 in home improvements last year.

Commissioner Schumacher inquired where Public Works was at with the water issue for the ETC|NEXT Plan. Martin reported that they are close, they have all easements and will likely construct in the summer of 2024. Commissioner Raphael asked where the funding comes from for this project. Martin replied the 2-cents.

Sonnick stated that they will continue to work through out the year for the 5-year capital plan, which includes maintenance of paths, new vehicles, etc. She noted that more thought and thoughtful growth should go into development. Sonnick stated that she sees the PC role in the Town Plan as painting the vision.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Discussion: 2024 Town Plan: Sonnick introduced Amanda Froeschle, from the Department of Health. Sonnick noted that Froeschle has worked with other municipalities to incorporate Health into Town Plans.

Froeschle stated that she is a Healthy Communities Specialist and serves Chittenden County. The goal is to provide healthy communities and learn the root causes of diseases and how to improve health and wellness. She hoped that the PC would build 'Health & Equity' into the Town Plan. Froeschle provided history on removing congestion and improve health, which can be converged into Land Use Planning and is converging again to show how built environments cause chronic disease. She wanted to inform the PC how they could integrate this information into the Town Plan. Froeschle provided an overhead slide presentation, which included the following topics:

- Building a Foundation for Health and Equity in Town Plans.
- Elements of a Healthy, Equitable Community.
- Health Equity exists when all people have a fair and just opportunity to be healthy.
- Community design impacts health outcomes (behaviors, Diseases, and Deaths.)
- A foundation is already in place (Echos Plan, Town Plan and Community health and

wellness efforts).

- Two key approaches to weaving health into a town plan, and they can be used together (Separate health element; and Comprehensive review of all elements).
- Housing and Health (Affordability; Air Quality, Social Connectedness, Accessibility.)
- Economic Development and Health (Income; Healthcare Access; Community Resources; Chronic Diseases; and Mental Health.)
- Thriving, Safe, Connected Neighbors (Social Connectedness; Infectious Disease; Substance Misuse Prevention; Safety; Livable Communities; and Youth Engagement.)
- Decision Support Tool Tree.
- Resources (Planning for Healthy, Equitable Communities; Roadmap for Healthier General Plans; Toolkits; and Evidence Based Practice List.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Minutes January 12, 2023

Commissioner Schumacher Moved and Commissioner Davis Seconded a Motion to approve the 1/12/2023 minutes as written. The Motion passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Other Business: None.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

By: _____
Dustin R. Brusio, Chair