

TOWN OF ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
OCTOBER 12, 2023

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT:

IN PERSON: Dustin Brusco, Chair; Johnathan Schumacher; Georgia Lavigne; Daniel Parkins; and Alternate Paula Duke.

VIRTUAL: Joshua Knox, Vice-Chair; and John Mangan, Clerk.

OTHERS PRESENT:

IN PERSON: Katherine Sonnick, Community Development Director; and Kent Johnson, Planner.

VIRTUAL: Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Sharon Zukowski; Gina Halpin Barrett; and Lorraine ZaLoom.

Chairman Brusco called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m., noting that Vice-Chair Knox and Commissioner Mangan are attending remotely. The Chair noted that no one from the public was present in the room. He announced that the Selectboard appointed an alternate Planning Commissioner, Paula Duke and explained that she would be sitting at the PC table and participating in Motions only if one of the seven PC members were not present. As it turned out Commissioner Johnson was not in attendance, therefore Commissioner Duke was acting as a voting member.

AGENDA ITEM 1. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES: None.

AGENDA ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

AGENDA ITEM 3: TOWN PLAN WORKSHOP: Katherine Sonnick walked through the chapters and additional changes to the Draft Plan since the last meeting. The Chapters under review are as follows:

Chapter 1- The Action Plan.

Chapter 2- Essex as a Community.

Chapter 3- How we Relate to the Land.

Chapter 4- Serving the Community.

Sonnick also discussed changes to Education and the Introduction. Small discussions between staff and the Planning Commission ensued and suggestions were put forth for consideration. Upon conclusion, Sonnick advised that she make the changes into the Draft, as discussed, as they needed to be sent out to the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), the State and to abutting Towns in order to meet the statutory deadline. Sonnick advised that additional changes can still be done to the Draft prior to the PC Public Hearing and even at the PC Public Hearing.

Vice Chair Knox inquired if his recent changes, sent via email, were incorporated into the Draft. Sonnick apologized as she missed his email on this matter. Knox reported that the changes were minor and did not change the content of the material. As such, the PC agreed that those changes could be incorporated into the Draft.

Chairman Bruso stated that this was the first time the PC has changed the process of the Town Plan update. He reported that formerly, the Planning Commission did all the work on the Draft and presented it to the public. He was pleased that the PC changed the process to bring the public and all committees, commissions, and Boards into the process, up front. He reported it has been very collaborative and was pleased with the process. The PC agreed. Bruso stated that a lot of effort went into the Draft Town Plan in an effort to streamline and make the document more readable for the public.

A brief discussion ensued as to how the document will be provided to the public. Sonnick advised that hard copies would be on hand and will also be available in pdf format.

AGENDA ITEM 4: APPROVE 2024 TOWN PLAN DRAFT:

Alternate Commissioner Duke MOVED and Commissioner Schumacher SECONDED a MOTION to incorporate the changes approved at this meeting into the Draft Town Plan and send the document to the CCRPC, State, and abutting Towns.

The MOTION passed 7-0.

AGENDA ITEM 5: Approval of Minutes September 28, 2023:

Commissioner Schumacher MOVED and Commissioner Mangan SECONDED a Motion to approve the September 28, 2023. The MOTION failed 7-0.

It was determined that some Commissioners received the preliminary draft minutes, while others received the final draft minutes. The 9/28/23 minutes will be placed on to the next Agenda.

6. OTHER BUSINESS:

Sonnick advised that the Chair was provided with a Resolution to sign on behalf of the PC, for a Municipal Planning Grant for a designated Town Center. If successful, the town would hire a consultant. Commissioner Parkins confirmed that staff would be writing the grant.

Alternate Commissioner Duke MOVED and Commissioner Schumacher Seconded a MOTION to apply for the grant and have the Chair sign the letter. The MOTION passed 7-0.

Sonnick advised that the updated Zoning & Subdivision Regulations go live on Monday. She asked if anyone wanted a hard bound copy. The PC responded yes. Sonnick stated that she will provide same and a link for the Regulations; and will have additional copies on hand in the office.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

By: 
Dustin R. Bruso, Chair