

TOWN OF ESSEX
DRAFT PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
OCTOBER 10, 2024

Note: This meeting was held on Zoom and In-House.

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT IN ROOM: Dustin Bruso, Chair; Josh Knox, Vice-Chair; Georgia Lavigne, Clerk; **Trefor Williams**; Ian Carroll; and Stephanie Bixby.

PC ATTENDING VIRTUALLY: Paula Duke (was in attended but unable to respond.)

PC ABSENT: Johnathan Schumacher

OTHERS PRESENT IN ROOM: Katherine Sonnick, Community Development Director; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Kent Johnson, Planner; Hubie Norton; John Stuart, P.E.; Jeffrey & Estelle LeClair; and David Skopin.

OTHERS VIRTUALLY: Sharon Zukowski and Cara West.

AGENDA ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Bruso called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m., and noted that Commissioner Duke was in attendance virtually, however unable to respond, therefore she would not be a voting member for this meeting and the Alternate would sit-in.

Chairman Bruso swore in the public.

AGENDA ITEM 2: AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES: None.

AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVE AGENDA: Vice Chair Knox Moved and Commissioner Williams Seconded a Motion to approve the agenda as warned. The Motion passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

David Skopin, 11 Skyline Drive, Essex, VT, asked the PC if they listened to the 18-minute Ted Talk that he informed them about at a previous meeting. Skopin felt he would be remiss to not pass the information onto the public. Skopin stated that everyone on the planet needs to take climate change seriously. He is concerned that if he can't get officials to take this matter seriously, then he has failed his grandchildren. He discussed his concerns with the Pinewood & Thompson Drive applications currently under review with the PC and stated they should not be building in these locations due to steep slopes. He stated that the community is crying for affordable housing and the proposed Pinewood Development is proposed with high end homes. He noted that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) provided information and, they need to take it seriously. He asked the PC if anybody believes that climate change is a serious issue. One PC member replied in agreement.

AGENDA ITEM 5: CONSENT AGENDA: APPLICATION OF JEFFREY & ESTELLE LECLAIR-SIMPLE PARCEL SUBDIVISION, 120 TOWERS ROAD, ESSEX, VT, LOCATED IN THE LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (R1) AND SCENIC RESOURCE PRESERVATION OVERLAY (SRPO) DISTRICTS.

Commissioner Lavigne Moved and Commissioner Carroll Seconded a Motion to approved the Consent Agenda as presented. The MOTION passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 6: PRESENTATION ON BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN FACILITY DESIGN STANDARDS.

Kent Johnson, Planner, reported that after the September 26th PC meeting regarding 132 Thompson Drive, he felt this presentation would be helpful. Johnson provided an overhead presentation that included some resources the PC could refer to when reviewing bike/pedestrian trails such as the Zoning Regulations, Town Plan, Bike & Pedi Plan, CCRPC's Transportation Plan, Public Work's Specifications, etc. Johnson spoke to the content of the Town Plan and its intentions as to what it was trying to achieve. He noted that the CCRPC graph was based on vehicle volumes and speed limits, bike lanes, etc., and the goal was to have consistency. He questioned how to address equity and showed examples from the VT Statewide Bike Plan. He concluded by stating the PC should follow best practices or if it can't look for an exemption showing logic behind the request.

Commissioner Williams asked if the PW Specifications has a standard cross section for a bike lane and if you can compel an applicant to adhere to it or if you can hold someone to a higher design standard. Johnson replied that if the town is taking over the lane, Public Work's needs to approved such a request which would be based on design guidance the applicant provided. Chairman Bruso stated that the PC has not embedded the documents and publications into the regulations and the PC should memorialize these documents. Katherine Sonnick replied that the PW Specifications does have guidance and if the applicant wants something less, then they would need to ask the Selectboard.

Hubie Norton asked "How do you define a bike lane" noting that vehicles other than bikes could use the lane. He asked if the PC tries to define a path, how would it be controlled for things such as speed, size of vehicles, etc. Norton stated the lane needs to be a size that fits all and fits the area. He pointed out that surfaces also matter, noting environmental concerns. He questioned if it was good to create more impervious surfaces. He noted the rail trail was built with gravel and is compact. He noted that South Burlington has a municipal stormwater facility and that is a "coming thing." He pointed out that grades are important, however some are not reasonable as you approach intersections. He agreed there needs to be a definition but, suggested for the PC to try not to be too rigid to prevent creativity.

John Stuart provided some of his road bike experiences, including races, throughout Vermont and other areas. He noted that state law requires a 4' clearance from bikers, however believes a 3' fog line clearance to the edge of the road is sufficient.

Vice Chair Knox referred to a draft letter to the General Manager of Green Mountain Transit that he prepared for the PC's review. Knox stated that when you look at the Growth Center, it is assumed that transit will be available, especially for people living in affordable housing.

AGENDA ITEM 9: APPROVAL OF 9/26/2024 MINUTES:

Commissioner Williams Moved and Commissioner Bixby Seconded a Motion to approve the minutes with a grammatical change. The Motion passed 6-0.

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97 **AGENDA ITEM 8: OTHER BUSINESS:** Katherine Sonnick reminded everyone that the next PC
98 meeting will be held at the High School Cafeteria. She noted if the PC has questions or comments to
99 send them to her to prepare for the meeting. Sonnick will find out if other forums are available.
100 Chairman Bruso asked if the Community Justice Dept. can participate. Sonnick replied that they are
101 only facilitating, not participating.

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103 The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

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105
106 By: _____
107 Dustin R. Bruso, Chair
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