

RPC_Minutes_2019.01.15

Members Present:

Stuart Levasseur

Sarah Danly

Bushrod Powers

Jim Rikert

Roni Johnson

Geo Honigford

Mark Wood

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by Stuart Levasseur, Chair.

Review the summary for the Town Report

Stuart Levasseur shared the draft summary of the Commission's activities for the Town Report. Members did not have any corrections.

Update to the Town Plan

Kimberly Gilbert from TRORC, Peter Gregory from TRORC, and Jan Eberly from the VT Department of Health attended the meeting to introduce themselves and discuss the process for updating the Town Plan.

- Kimberly is the regional planner at TRORC who will be helping Royalton with the support from the Municipal Planning Grant Award.
- The common approach is to focus on one chapter per Planning Commission meeting.
- There are certain sections of the plan update that will require the Planning Commission to seek input from other groups in town, for example, for the municipal services element of the plan the PC will be seeking input from the fire and police departments.
- There are some areas where the last version of the Town Plan called out to look at more closely this time. There are also new statutes that need to be addressed. Kimberly will help identify these. As always, the land use plan will also need to be in compliance with the regional plan.
- The updated draft should be done by the end of December so that the Selectboard can review and vote on it in January 2020.

Discussion: one issue that has already been flagged is that the Selectboard is interested in expanding the downtown area as the water district actually extends past the downtown area and they're hoping to have the same boundaries. There's also not much space for doing anything in the current downtown area.

- Peter clarified that the process will be to take the existing water service area, look at the statutes again and the goals (compact settlements and rural countryside), regional plan maps, and have a discussion on what meets the statutes and whether what we want is generally consistent with the regional plan.

Preliminary discussion on things that need to be addressed, by plan section:

1. Natural scenic and historic resources / ag and forestry: there are new regulations around new habitat block and forest connectors. The Municipal Planning Grant states this will be a joint meeting with the conservation commission.
2. Community facilities and services: will have to address sewer and water systems to see how much development they can accommodate.
3. Health and emergency services: Will need fire, rescue, and police department input. Jan Eberly also spoke briefly about an initiative between DoH and the RPCs including TRORC to expand health related language in town plans. This public health language is not a requirement in statute, but the DoH and RPC are supportive and can provide a template of language. Some towns even have health chapters that can include recreation opportunities, nutrition, etc. Kimberly will send this information for the PC to decide if/how it should be incorporated, and Jan is available to come to the meetings around any chapters that we want to incorporate health language into.
4. Housing: last town plan review says that the discussion on accessory apartments needs to be expanded, so some language and policies will need to be added.
5. Will need more discussion on childcare (currently lives in the education chapter). The goal is to ensure the availability of safe and affordable childcare...which could include biz assistance for childcare providers, childcare workforce developments, etc. The Town is not expected to get into the business of providing it, but has to acknowledge it, e.g. land use has to allow for adequate childcare.
6. Planning Commission will need to seek information from the Royalton road foreman for the transportation section.
7. Land Use: a major point of the MPG application is that the future land use map is currently incompatible with the regional plan future land use map. (Also, our neighboring towns have made adjustments and we want to accommodate along the borders.)
 - a. Q from the Planning Commission: will the new Act 250 rules have an effect? Answer from TRORC staff: no, what guides local and regional plans probably won't change. There was talk in the testimony about how important local and regional planning is as the foundation in making Act 250 work, so if local and regional plans are vague it doesn't work well with Act 250. The goal is just to make it clear to everybody.
8. Flood resilience chapter: MPG includes a note to consult the White River Partnership for more information on how the town can become more resilient.
9. Expand the implementation chapter.
10. Beefed up Energy element – we are on TRORC's list for help from them and DNR. There is also interest in getting support from the Energy Clinic at Vermont Law School.

In addition there will be basic updates throughout the Plan.

Decision on process:

- Kimberly will share with PC members the chapters with her notations on required and advised changes and updated data.
- PC members will review in advance.
- Edits to that chapter will be done collaboratively (on a projector) during each meeting.

After brief discussion, the PC determined to start with the land use chapter, as the PC is partway through edits around housing and particularly Planned Unit Development.

- Energy chapter is suggested as a possible 2nd priority since it will be a brand new energy plan and will likely have an effect on other chapters as well.

The PC decided to tentatively continue with 1 meeting/month for now but after the first meeting or two, will assess whether to begin holding 2 meetings/month.

Next Meeting: Feb 5th

Town Plan Chapter: Land Use.

Other Business

No news on the art grant.

Re: December meeting minutes: Bushrod motioned and Geo seconded to adopt them as posted. Motion approved.

Bushrod moved and Mark seconded to adjourn; meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm.

Meeting notes respectfully submitted by Sarah Danly, clerk.