

## **RPC\_Minutes\_2019.03.05**

### **Members Present:**

Stuart Levasseur  
Jim Rikert  
Bushrod Powers  
Geo Honigford  
Sarah Danly  
Roni Johnson

### **Additional attendees:**

Kimberly Gilbert (TRORC), Jim Northrup (Royalton resident)

### **Minutes**

Meeting called to order at 6:10pm by Stuart Levasseur, Chair.

#### Updates on Art Grant Application

Nell Gwin and Sarah Danly along with other Royalton residents have continued working on the art grant application, which is due March 18. Efforts are currently focused on getting permission from the railroad as the proposed site is on their property.

Jim Northrup, a Royalton resident, attended the Planning Commission meeting in order to connect about the arts grant, and shared information he previously received from the railroad that they are planning to refinish the underpass surface in the coming year. He will forward the email from the railroad engineer to the project team.

#### Previous Minutes

Geo Honigford moved to approve the February draft minutes as posted, Bushrod Powers seconded. After no discussion, the minutes were approved.

#### Town Plan Update

The Planning Commission and TRORC staff member Kimberly Gilbert continued working on revisions of the Town Plan, continuing on the Land Use section.

The Commission revisited questions that had been brought up at the February meeting, with additional information now supplied by Kimberly:

- At the February meeting, there was discussion around a clause prohibiting development on ridgelines, and whether and how ridgelines should be defined. At the March meeting, Kimberly provided examples from Rochester and Thetford. After discussion, the Planning Commission determined that the clause about ridgelines was simply a more specific example of a “natural or scenic feature”, which is protected by a later clause in the same section. The clause specifically about ridgelines was removed, ridgelines was explicitly listed as an example of a scenic resource, and the Commission additionally added a specific reference to “visual impact”.
- Another question raised at the February meeting was whether and how to define a home business (for the purpose of the clause “Within settled areas, home businesses are determined to be a use compatible with existing uses.”) Kimberly provided examples of ways to define home businesses by using percentage of the home’s floor area that is used by the business, number of vehicle trips, or other metrics. The Planning Commission briefly discussed their general support for home businesses and that the primary concern was an excessive number of car trips to and from the home. Ultimately the decision was made that rather than define “home business,” there would be language added to clarify that “home businesses *that do not have an undue adverse impact on the character of the area*” would be determined compatible.

Jim Rikert shared language he had found in the town of Sharon subdivision regulations that “the planning commission may waive or vary the provisions of these regulations... if in its judgement the provisions are not required by the special circumstances of this subdivision.” The Planning Commission had a number of questions around whether this or similar language would allow the town more flexibility in its land use policies if a project in the best interest of the town were to arise. Kimberly will look into the Sharon language and what an equivalent could potentially be within a Town Plan (since the Sharon example is from subdivision regulations.)

The Planning Commission then began reviewing the Future Land Use subsection.

- An explanatory paragraph about a 1999-2000 study was removed as being no longer relevant.
- The phrase encouraging “multi-family residential development” in the village (p. 82) was changed to “multi-unit residential development” to be more inclusive.
- The commission discussed the parking situation downtown and what it means for retailers that need room for parking like a grocery store – there would not be enough parking, or room to add parking, for a grocery store in the Village. But the old language would require the example grocery store, as a primary retail store, to be located in the village. As a fix, the Commission added “area for parking” to the clause that exempts “retail establishments that require substantial area for storage of materials” from needing to be located within the village.
- A reference was added to encourage accessory dwelling units as well as multi-unit development in the village.
- No changes were made to the subsection on Foxville Hamlet.
- The Resource Conservation Area was retitled as the Low-Density Resource Conservation Area. All the changes previously discussed at Planning Commission meetings in 2017 (?) were reviewed and accepted.
- Flood hazard/Shoreland area:
  - We currently have two sets of purposes (bulleted list and narrative) – Kimberly will draft a condensed version and the planning commission will review at the next meeting.

- The group discussed the adequacy of the current flood plain area (aligned with FEMA's 100-year flood zone.) The commission began a discussion on whether it would be possible and advisable to expand the area to which the floodplain ordinance applies, through increasing the distance from the floodplain or elevation above the floodplain.
  - There were concerns raised about houses built since Irene on properties that flooded during Irene. Clearly it is economically viable for the developers but there are subsequent risks to purchasers, renters, and adjoining property owners, so it may be appropriate to discourage this.
  - Geo is the floodplain zoning officer/admin for the town of Sharon and explained more about the process and what Sharon's regulations look like – for example, they have a flood hazard area and the special flood hazard area.
  - Currently Royalton does have an up-to-date map of the 500 year floodplain but our current floodplain zoning permits construction in the 500 year zone and only limits construction in the 100 year floodplain.
  - The Planning Commission is tentatively interested in amending the floodplain zoning to address the 500 year floodplain. This could be accomplished in the Town Plan by making a recommendation to amend the floodplain zoning and by defining the flood hazard area for the purposes of the Plan as the 500 year area.
  - There was brief discussion on what this would mean for people who have existing houses in the 500 year floodplain area. This would not affect their eligibility for insurance, but if they wanted to add on to the existing structures, they would have to work through the floodplain zoning administrator. Sharon has a development review board; some construction is completely allowed, some completely prohibited, and some proposals go before the review board. For example, a house could be elevated above the base level, and might be approved by the review board with the condition that the mechanicals are also elevated within the house. Sharon also has a requirement for "dry access" which prevents construction that is elevated above the floodplain but completely surrounded by floodplain, which is a form of construction particularly concerning to members of the Royalton Planning Commission.
  - At the next PC meeting, before making a decision, the Commission will look at the 500 year floodplain map.

The next meeting will be on March 19, as the Commission has committed to meeting twice monthly as needed during the Plan update process. The Commission will continue to review the Land Use section.

Jim Rikert motioned to adjourn the meeting and Sarah Danly seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm.