

RPC_Minutes_2019.07.02

Planning Commission Members Present:

Stuart Levasseur
Geo Honigford
Roni Johnson
Stuart Levasseur
David Brandau
Mark Wood
Jim Rikert
Bushrod Powers
Nell Gwin

Additional Attendees:

Kimberly Gilbert, TRORC
Jan Eberly, Vermont Department of Health
Loretta Stalnaker, Royalton Police Chief

Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 pm

- Stuart Levasseur reminded the group that he had shared the Town's updated policy on conflict of interest
- First the commission discussed whether to add a section on public health as recommended by TRORC and the VT Department of Health
 - The current plan only has what is required by statute, Health and Emergency Services
 - TRORC and VDH are recommending that towns begin addressing public health a well and have a template that can be used to start.
 - Jan Eberly noted that this is a place to include language on walkability and physical activity which could help in applying for VTrans sidewalk funding. The PC noted that there is definitely more sidewalk work to be done in town.
 - Public health could be added into the existing health and emergency services chapter or could be separate.
 - Sarah Danly motioned to add a section on public health, Geo Honigford seconded. The PC then clarified that the proposal was to add it as a standalone chapter rather than incorporate into Health and Emergency Services. PC members voted in favor of adding the new chapter.

Review of Health and Emergency Services Chapter:

- Some policies were moved to the new Public Health section.
- The PC asked Royalton Police Chief Loretta Stalnaker, who was present, if the language about needing an expanded police force was still applicable.
 - The answer is that yes, there is still room for expansion. The department is not currently considered full time, the state would prefer it became full time.

- There were questions raised around whether there are procedures for regular maintenance of the hazard mitigation plan and whether all relevant people & departments were familiar with the plan. The PC will check with Gidget Lyman, the town's Emergency Coordinator, about the status and appropriate language for the plan. There will also be language added about distributing the plan as appropriate.
- Various factual updates were made to the narrative portion of the chapter, including updated information on which towns contribute to the rescue service and removal of an outdated reference to intermunicipal policing with Sharon.
 - The use of data was discussed and the PC feels it is more helpful to see incident statistics over time rather than a single year snapshot. Rather than switching out the newest available data for the year provided in the current plan, Mark Wood and Loretta Stalnaker will look up annual statistics for each year since then, for the fire/rescue and police departments respectively.
- In addition to asking Gidget Lyman about the status and recommendations for the hazard mitigation plan, the PC will ask her for other suggested changes for emergency management planning in general, so more edits to this chapter may be forthcoming.
- The PC discussed the extent to which the emergency management section addresses the railroad.
 - The current language mentions derailments and collisions but not risk associated with materials being carried.
 - The PC also noted that there have been more collision incidents in the past few years.
 - In the next few years the railroad will be working on the tracks in Middlebury and will be rerouting more traffic through the Royalton line.
 - After this discussion, the PC noted that this level of detail is more appropriate for the LEMP rather than all needing to be captured within the Town Plan.
- A reference was added to the fact that the Fire Department has now gotten approval for an emergency access ramp onto the interstate but is in need of funding.
- A recommendation was added to encourage the use of Nox boxes so that Fire and Rescue can enter buildings in emergencies without breaking through the door.

Public Health chapter:

- Kimberly shared the template that TRORC developed for a public health chapter and the group used this as the starting point for edits.
- Language was added around supporting children's wellbeing and safety.
 - It was also noted that the narrative introduction refers to domestic violence but no policies or recommendations specifically mention this. Language was added to address this.
 - The group acknowledged that it is difficult to find concrete actions that are within the power of the Town to address these issues, but added language around increasing accessibility to resources for children and families.
- Support of a walking path was added to the recommendations. Jan Eberly from VDH noted that there are grant sources that could help with this such as the Governor's physical fitness grant (as well as biking and pedestrian grants from VTrans.)

- Regarding the template's recommendation to promote and expand farmers markets and gardens, the PC noted that one of each already exists in Royalton but both are facing challenges. The farmers market in particular is in need of a bigger customer base. Members of the PC identified several possible reasons for this including timing that is less convenient for customers (hours) or puts the market in competition with others (day of the week.)
- Language was added about supporting the Royalton Food Shelf.
- Jan Eberly shared a few examples of strategies other small towns are looking into, such as locating food resources at the library or at the doctor's office which helps clients get reimbursement for transportation.
- The group discussed the idea of smoke-free public spaces and how to appropriately balance discouraging smoking with the practical implications of enforcement and potential negative effects on downtown businesses. Ultimately it was decided to add language about encouraging smoke-free environments without specifying a ban on smoking on public property.
- A reference to driving under the influence was added to the recommendation on raising awareness about substance abuse.
- The narrative was adapted to be specific to Royalton and the services that Royalton residents tend to utilize.
- The public health chapter was not finished and will be resumed at a subsequent meeting.

Miscellaneous

- The PC noted that this plan is a very long document, which is a barrier for residents reading it. The group discussed that part of the value in having a plan is to serve as a statement of values and as an education tool. Therefore the group is interested in creating a separate executive summary that lists the goals, policies, and recommendations, as well as some of the more interesting visual elements (photos, maps) to make a document that is more appealing and easier for other Royalton residents to read.
- Regarding the reference to healthy homes in the public health section, it was noted that there are organizations that can help with this but it's hard to even navigate those organizations to find where to get help. It could be of great value to the public to list out the services the organizations provide, and their contacts, rather than just listing the names of organizations in the narrative.
 - The group discussed briefly how it would be even more valuable if the town were able to hire a position that could help residents navigate the support services.
- The draft minutes from the last 4 meetings were reviewed. Motion was made and seconded to approve them all as posted and the motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.