

TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Minutes for March 3, 2010 Meeting
Approved on April 14, 2010

Commission Members Present: Mark Letorney (Chair), Gordon Gebauer, Patrick Haller, Jason Hoover and Seth Jensen (7:21 PM).

Commission Members Absent: N/A

Also Present: Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator).

The meeting began at approximately 7:06 p.m.

Architectural Design Standards

Jason began by giving a brief overview of architectural standards. He stated the Town could adopt general or specific standards that could be adopted as guidelines or regulations. He felt regulations would probably be most effective in maintaining the historic village character. The Commission agreed that architectural standards should only be applied to the Town Common and Town Village Districts. Furthermore, they felt that the regulations should definitely affect commercial development but they were unsure whether residential development should also be included. They decided to create draft architectural standards for both commercial and residential development and then take public comment to determine the extent of residential regulation, if any.

Jason said the DRB could review applications for architectural design if the standards were general, but if the Town adopted more specific standards the Town would likely have to appoint an architectural design committee.

The Commission agreed to start off with simple standards and test them to see how they work. Pat said he liked Manchester's guidelines and added that he felt the Town should be restrictive when it came to signs, lighting etc and use guidelines for actual structural design.

Jason stated that it would be difficult for the DRB to review and regulate applications if they were guidelines.

Mark suggested they give a broad definition/interpretation of what is in keeping with the village character and implement strict regulations on what is not allowed.

The Planning Commission developed the following goals and objectives regarding possible architectural standards for the Town Common and Town Village Districts:

- Develop and maintain property in a way that is in keeping with the existing historic quality of the area (ex windows, materials, roof pitch, building height, building dimensions, lot layout, settlement patterns, etc)
- Create a welcoming village (ex. curb appeal, fencing, access points, lot layout, landscaping, etc)
- Provide a feel of community and promote a sense of place (ex. history and heritage).
- Promote commercial/economic development while maintaining existing features.
- Encourage increased use of existing structures.
- Promote growth within the village.
- Preserve existing historic buildings (ex. adaptive re-use).

- Concentrate development and uses within the village and minimize sprawl outside of the village.
- Focus on commercial and industrial development.
- Create standards that compliment historic buildings (ex. roof pitch, building height, materials (brick, wood, etc)). Note: Development can be modern but in keeping with character.
- Development respectful of neighboring properties.
- Standards to apply to existing and new development (ex. exterior renovations).
- Mixture of guidelines and regulations.

Commissioners will pull together regulations and guidelines they feel will work in the village and are in keeping with the goals and objectives stated above.

The Commission asked Melissa to contact Smart Growth Vermont to ask for their assistance in developing appropriate standards.

Jason suggested the Commission ask to be Smart Growth's next case study.

Adaptive Re-Use Regulations

Seth began by explaining the concept of adaptive reuse.

The Commission discussed whether the regulations should apply to the entire town or the village area. They agreed it should apply to the entire town. Furthermore, the Commission discussed whether reconstructed/relocated barns should be eligible for adaptive re-use and they agreed they should be eligible.

The Commission decided to integrate the Waitsfield, Jericho and Richmond regulations with a few minor revisions. Melissa said she would present the integrated regulations to the Commission in April, at which time they can review the draft and make further revision.

Mixed Use Development

The Commission decided to request the services of Smart Growth Vermont in determining appropriate village growth, uses and regulations.

Town Center Committee Status Report

Jason and Melissa gave a brief overview of the projects the Town Center Committee is working on as part of the Town Center Project.

Draft Planning Commission Letters

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft thank you letter addressed to the Conservation Commission and Energy Committee. Minor revisions were made and Melissa offered to send the letters to the Committees involved and copy the Planning Commission and Selectboard.

Other Business

Gordon asked the Planning Commission whether the Road Committee had two goals 1) recommend road repairs and upgrades 2) implement the goals of the draft Town Plan (ex. traffic calming, pedestrian safety, etc).

The Commission agreed that the Road Committee would be charged with addressing both of those concerns/issues.

The Commission discussed the upcoming Municipal Planning Grant and wastewater grant and decided neither was applicable to any of the Commission's upcoming projects/implementation strategies.

Planning Commission Work Plan & Implementation Plan

David Tilton, Selectboard Member, would like to attend the April 7th Planning Commission meeting to discuss the draft Town Plan.

Melissa will ask Smart Growth Vermont to attend the April 7th Planning Commission meeting to discuss architectural design standards, village revitalization and encouragement of mixed use development in village areas.

Minutes of the February 3, 2010 Meeting

Gordon MOVED to approve the minutes as amended.

Pat SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 4 – 0.

Seth abstained.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:20 p.m.

Submitted by,

Melissa Manka, Planning Coordinator