

TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Minutes for May 4, 2011 Meeting
Approved on June 1, 2011

Commission Members Present: Mark Letorney (Chair), Jeremy Berger, Seth Jensen, Gordon Gebauer and Daniel Strobridge

Commission Members Absent: n/a

Also Present: Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator).

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

Draft Performance Standards

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft performance standards.

Jeremy asked whether the Town should have special standards for gas stations.

Seth stated many towns have specific performance standards for high impact development such as gas stations in addition to general performance standards. He offered to present example language to the Commission.

The Planning Commission agreed they were done drafting the general performance standards but would like to research specific standards for gas stations.

Dan questioned whether the draft language was too vague, especially when taking agricultural operations into consideration.

Seth explained that agricultural operations would be exempt per state statute and the Commission was going to address how to inform individuals purchasing subdivision lots abutting active agricultural operations of said operations via deed language.

Mark explained that the town wants to remain rural, yet foster small scale commerce. Therefore, it isn't necessary to draft language that would require an expert to quantify impacts on abutting properties. The goal is to foster development that would not negatively impact abutting property owners in the first place. Therefore, the Zoning Administrator should be able to enforce the proposed regulations.

PUD Density Bonuses for Donation of Public Spaces

Seth began by stating he doesn't agree with our current density bonus language that grants bonuses for PUDs, yet we require PUDs. He said he likes the idea of granting bonuses in lieu of dedicating something for the public good. He said Westford could do something similar, but less complicated, to Hinesburg's language.

Jeremy said he liked Burlington's public art density bonus.

Seth said they could grant a percentage of the allowed density based on the amount of open space or the value of the public good.

Gordon also thought density bonuses should be granted for public good.

Mark said the Commission would then need to define "public good".

Jeremy said there was more value to doing something in the Town Center area and therefore the density bonus should be greater if donating something of public good in this area. He also stated he was uncomfortable with granting density bonuses based on monetary donations.

Dan said density bonuses should help to create contiguous open space lands.

Gordon stated what constituted a public good would depend on the zoning district.

Jeremy said the Commission should create a matrix with a bonus multiplier where the owner of lands in the AFR 2 District could donate something for the public good in the Town Center area and that donation would be worth more of a bonus than if something was donated in another district.

Seth said what constitutes a public good would need be tied into the Town Plan and Capital Budget.

Melissa said she would send them the Capital Budget for review.

Gordon mentioned that a developer could donate a certain amount of money towards a capital budget project to receive a density bonus.

Mark said he would like to rough out some language.

Seth said the easiest way to draft the language would be to calculate the density bonus by granting a percentage of allowed density, but there should be a cap on the total number of dwellings allowed.

Mark said a real incentive is needed for developers.

Seth said a control would need to be put in place to ensure density bonus projects are completed.

Commercial Use Standards and Definitions

The Planning Commission discussed the definition of restaurant.

Seth said he could provide the Commission with some example language. He added that he felt restaurants should be allowed in the Town Common and Town Village District with the possibility of allowing them in adaptive reuse buildings as a conditional use in the AFR 2 District.

Commissioners questioned why it should not be allowed in the AFR 2 District as a conditional use.

Seth said he saw a distinction between operations with employees on-site and operations with customers coming and going in the AFR 2 district, the latter being undesirable for a number of reasons. He added that he would not want to see a chain restaurant along Route 15.

Melissa said the Commission could develop architectural standards for commercial business in the AFR 2 District to prohibit unsightly development along the state highways.

Seth said customer based business should be located in the Town Common area to promote a viable town center and used the example of the Post Office location negatively effecting the center of town.

The Commission agreed to create form based zoning language for the Town Center area and AFR 2 District and revisit whether to allow restaurants in the AFR 2 District at that time.

Town Center Revitalization Project

The Planning Commission discussed how to move forward with the project now that Smart Growth Vermont is unable to assist them. The Commission agreed to attempt to draft architectural standards for commercial development, sign standards and parking standards through form based zoning.

Appoint PC Chair, Vice Chair & Clerk

Gordon MOVED to appoint Mark Letorney as Chair.

Jeremy SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 5-0.

Gordon MOVED to appoint Seth Jensen as Vice Chair.
Mark SECONDED the motion.
The motion PASSED: 5-0.

Mark MOVED to appoint Gordon Gebauer as Clerk.
Jeremy SECONDED the motion.
The motion PASSED: 5-0.

Minutes of the April 6, 2011 Meeting

Jeremy MOVED to approve the minutes.
Gordon SECONDED the motion.
The motion PASSED: 4-0.
Dan abstained.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:07 p.m.

Submitted by,
Melissa Manka, Planning Coordinator