



Town of Bolton
3045 Theodore Roosevelt Highway
Bolton VT 05676
802-434-5075

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

October 13, 2014
6:00 – 8:30 p.m.
Bolton Town Office

Planning Commission members present: Linda Baker (Chair), Steve Barner, Jim Bralich and Rodney Pingree

Planning Commission members absent: Carol Devlin

Also present: Sharon Murray (Select Board), Lars Botzjorns (Conservation Commission)

Acting Clerk: Sharon Murray

Agenda

1. Public Comment
2. Minutes ~ September 8, 2014
3. Select Board Budget Requests ~ GIS Mapping; PC FY15/16 Budget
4. 2015 Municipal Planning Grant ~ Changes
5. Town Plan ~ Natural Resources
6. Other communications/mail
7. Any other business
8. Adjournment

Call to Order

Linda Baker called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Agenda Item #1 ~ Public Comment

The floor was opened to public comment. There was none.

Agenda Item #2 ~ Minutes September 8, 2014 Meeting

Rodney Pingree made a motion to accept the minutes of September 8, 2014 as presented. Steve Barner seconded the motion. The motion carried (4-0).

Agenda Item #3 ~ Select Board Budget Requests

The Planning Commission tabled the recommendation to fund the conversion of town tax maps to a GIS-compatible format until their November meeting, pending a response from the Conservation Commission to evenly split the \$450 cost between Planning and Conservation Commission budgets. Lars Botzjorns agreed to bring this up with the Conservation Commission at their next meeting.

Sharon Murray noted that the Select Board had started working on next year's budget, and asked the Planning Commission for their FY15/16 budget request. Commission members discussed the need for additional staff support, or for a reserve fund to raise the funds needed to hire outside help – i.e., to set aside \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year over a five-year period to fund required five-year plan updates and associated bylaw amendments. Sharon Murray noted that a reserve fund would require voter approval. Steve Barner clarified that it could not be used fund to the current update, given the short amount of time remaining before the town plan expires.

Rodney Pingree suggested that the Planning Commission will still need an annual operating budget, for example to help fund groundwater mapping. He also recommended that the updated town plan include a reference to groundwater mapping in relation to the potential development of a municipal water system, to qualify for state assistance. A municipal system, to be paid for by users, could address existing water supply and quality issues, including salt contamination, and allow for higher densities of development in village areas.

Jim Bralich made the motion to “recommend that the town establish a planning reserve fund for plan and bylaw updates, to be funded in FY15 at \$4,000; and that the Planning Commission's operational budget be reduced from \$4,000 to \$3,000.” The motion was seconded by Rodney Pingree and passed (4-0).

Agenda Item #4 ~ Municipal Planning Grant Changes

Linda Baker reported that the Select Board had approved the Planning Commission's original Municipal Planning Grant request of \$8,000 which required no local match. The two estimates received based on the proposed scope of work, however, ranged from \$14,000 to \$15,000. Sharon Murray noted that the Select Board had since agreed – pending approval by the Planning Commission – to allocate \$2,000 from the Planning Commission's FY14/15 budget, resulting in a \$4,000 state match if the grant is awarded, which would bring the total project budget up to \$14,000, reflecting the lower estimate. Rodney Pingree made the motion to “allocate \$2,000 from the Planning Commission's budget as a local planning grant match.” The motion was seconded by Steve Barner, and passed (4-0). Steve noted that the town should make sure that the contract for services was written to not exceed this amount.

Sharon Murray also reported that she and Select Board member Jen Dudley-Galliard had signed onto the state's grant system as “Municipal Authorizing Officials” representing the Select Board, and that Carol Devlin, who had prepared and entered the grant application, would administer it on behalf of the town, if awarded.

Agenda Item #5 ~ Town Plan: Natural Resources

The following handouts were distributed for Planning Commission review:

- An initial draft of the natural resources section, prepared by Linda Baker,

- Written comments and suggested updates based on a review of the current town, submitted by Lars Botzjoorns; and
- Listings of recent events, available studies and reports, and municipal actions related to natural cultural and scenic resources since the plan was last updated, and an initial, incomplete list of issues for Commission consideration, prepared by Sharon Murray.

A hardcopy of the ECOS Science to Action Report was also provided – Linda requested that the PDF version be forwarded to Planning Commissioners.

Lars Botzjoorns provided an update on Conservation Commission work, including tiered mapping using ECOS data that identifies primary, secondary and tertiary conservation areas that reflect local priorities for wildlife habitat protection. Primary conservation areas (PCAs) are those that should be protected from development (e.g., rare, endangered and threatened species habitat). Secondary conservation areas are those that may accommodate limited encroachment, with mitigation to avoid or minimize impacts (e.g., habitat blocks). Tertiary areas include the rest of town. He noted that 85% of Bolton is included in state-mapped habitat blocks—including portions of the village and floodplain. Results of the ECOS study, and associated maps, should be incorporated in the plan update, along with relevant terms and definitions provided back in April.

He also noted that the Conservation Commission was waiting on the County Forester's forest management recommendations to finish their work on the Preston Pond Management Plan, which also should be referenced in the town plan. Sharon Murray suggested that the plan also recommended that Preston Pond holdings be officially designated as a town forest, which may allow the town to access additional sources of funding for recreation and resource management.

The Planning Commission, Lars and Sharon reviewed and discussed the first two pages of Linda's rough draft, and offered the following comments and suggestions:

- Introduction should also identify rail and Route 2 rights-of-way as dividing the town, which may also affect wildlife movement.
- Bolton's topography (steep slopes, drainage) is a critical limitation for development, as noted – provide elevation range (highest, lowest) elevations, percentage of upland (e.g., above 1500 feet, 2500 feet), % of steep and very steep slopes, as well as percentage of valley floor in floodplain. Get these numbers from the CCRPC?
- Add information on climate change, expected impacts (e.g., warming, increased storm events, impacts on ski area) and the need to mitigate, adapt—could be addressed in new hazards element, but will also affect natural resources.
- Add a paragraph on air quality? Regional, local sources of air pollution, air quality index.
- Include reference to bedrock, surficial geology (need maps, information) – map/note existing sand and gravel deposits, active gravel pits – question regarding number of active pits in town? Also note impacts of gravel extraction on environment, water quality.

- Discuss prominent geological features – e.g., peaks, Bolton Pot Holes, other swimming holes, etc.
- Reference existing landslides, landslide hazards along Joiner Brook (recent study, report) –could include in new hazards element, along with discussion of flood and fluvial erosion hazards (e.g., from flash flooding on local brooks) – Irene 2011, flash floods 2013.
- Get updated information regarding soils—primary ag soils, septic system suitability—to be included on CCRPC maps? Check.
- Add paragraph somewhere on scenic resources – e.g., peaks and uplands, I89 corridor, views from Libby’s Look (Preston Pond), Winooski River; also cultural resources (historic sites, structures, archaeological sites) – or include this in a separate section. Consider plan recommendation to conduct additional scenic, cultural inventory work in town (scenic roads, views from public land).
- Expand discussion of forests to include discussion of “working landscape” (local economic importance of timber management, logging, wood lots, etc.) in addition to importance for wildlife habitat. Note related issues of forest subdivision and fragmentation on timber/forest management (e.g., VNRC work). Also highlight/strongly support forestland enrollment in Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) Program (minimum 25 acres, excluding house sites), need to require accepted management practices (AMPs) and management plans, maintaining access to upland areas (woods/logging roads for timber, forest, wildlife management); prevent the conversion/use of logging roads for development.
- Move discussion of natural communities (under Forests) to separate section on wildlife, wildlife habitat. Include as separate table/list rather than listing in narrative – review against tables, information included in the ECOS report. Incorporate information re wildlife habitat, travel corridors, blocks, etc. from ECOS report.
- Update type, numbers, general (buffered) locations of rare, endangered and threatened species identified in town – and others of concern. Bicknell Thrush habitat (check referenced elevation), peregrine falcon nesting sites, bald eagle nesting site? Bear—mast stands (lowland oak, upland beech). Sharon will forward info received from state in 2011. Also available online through VANR’s BioFinder.
- Instead of just mentioning Robbins Mt Wildlife Management Area, provide a table of all public, conserved lands in town – e.g., under proposed “Preserved (Conserved) Land” section – including name, parcel size, ownership – to correspond with updated conserved land map from CCRPC. Noted that all these areas support hunting, fishing—discuss under recreation?

Lars agreed to work with Linda on natural resource draft revisions for review at the Planning Commission’s December meeting, to include additional input from the Conservation Commission.

Sharon Murray noted that CCRPC had supplied initial drafts of a natural resource map (ECOS data), conserved lands map, and hazard area map that appear to be based on dated or incomplete information. She’ll review these with Carol and get back to Pam Brangan regarding the status of available information.

Agenda Item #6 ~ Other communications/mail

- VLCT is holding a Fall Planning and Zoning Workshop, open to Planning Commissioners, on October 29th at the Capitol Plaza in Montpelier.
- The new edition of the CCRPC's newsletter is available – hardcopies can be provided for those who don't subscribe online.
- The state has also developed a “stormwater calculator” to make it easier for local officials to calculate the volume of stormwater generated from delineated watersheds.

Agenda Item #7 ~ Any Other Business

- The Select Board appointed Carol Devlin to the Planning Commission to replace Jenifer Andrews, as requested by the Commission.
- The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for Monday, November 10th. Everyone has their homework assignment – to identify key issues/concerns specific to Bolton, to be addressed under their sections of the plan.

Agenda Item #8 ~ Adjournment

Jim Bralich made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Rodney Pingree. Motion passed (4-0). The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Sharon Murray
Acting Clerk, Planning Commission

These minutes are unofficial until accepted.

These minutes were read and accepted by a quorum of the Planning Commission on:

Linda Baker

For the Planning Commission

