



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

Planning Commission Hearing Minutes

TOWN PLAN

February 9, 2017

Smilie Memorial Elementary School

6:00 p.m.

Planning Commission Members Present: Steve Barner, Jim Bralich, Rodney Pingree and Deb Shelby

Planning Commission Members Absent: Linda Baker (Chair)

Also Present: Emily Nosse-Leirer (CCRPC), Josh Arneson, Joss Besse, Susan Bralich, Ralph Deslauriers, Jen Dudley-Gaillard, Amy Grover, Jim Kilpeck, Kim Kilpeck, Liz Lawrence, Michael McKeown, Sharon Murray, Leslie Pelch, Peter Schoen, Allison Smith, Doug Smith, Gary Urban, Larissa Urban

Clerk: Carol Devlin

Call to Order

Rodney Pingree (Vice Chair) called the hearing to order at 6:06 p.m.

Introduction

Deb Shelby began the hearing by giving a brief summary of the process the Planning Commission followed to develop the hearing draft of the Town Plan. Her overview included the community engagement, the Municipal Planning Grant, the pilot program for the Planning Manual, and the organization of the Town Plan. She also explained that the PC has received comments from other town boards and will be considering those comments when editing the plan after the hearing.

Emily Nosse-Leirer explained that the CCRPC (Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission) Planning Advisory Committee and the State of Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development had reviewed the plan. The CCRPC PAC issued comments which will be considered when editing the plan after the hearing. So far DHCD has indicated that they like the plan but has not issued specific comments.

Topics Discussed

The group discussed the following issues:

- Gary Urban asked for an explanation of a hamlet in West Bolton.
 - The proposal for a hamlet in West Bolton would NOT change the governmental or infrastructure status of the area.
 - A hamlet is based on historic settlement patterns and would allow for a denser, neighborhood style of development.
 - A hamlet would address DRB concerns re: the number of variances requested by West Bolton land owners.
 - A hamlet would allow for smaller lot sizes, different setbacks and greater density.
 - Michael McKeown stated that there are limited options for development in West Bolton.
- Sharon Murray expressed concern about protection of water quality.
 - Has the policy been weakened?
 - Were the buffers for unnamed streams sufficient?
 - The Advisory Group (representatives from the PC, the CCRPC and DHCD) will meet with Sharon next week to discuss this and other concerns in-depth.
- Preserving ridgelines
 - Concern was raised re: the preservation of Bolton's ridgelines.
 - Inventory of scenic views/ridgelines is an action step.
- Alternative energy
 - The state has new goals/laws re: energy. Details haven't been announced yet. They will be announced later in 2017 (after the Town Plan has been approved).
 - Towns will NOT be allowed to say no wind or solar energy in town (NIMBY). If they want a say in energy siting, towns must address where it will and will not be allowed.
 - Energy Certification is part of the new state energy policy. Towns will be eligible for Energy Certification based on their town plans. Amending the Town Plan to comply with the requirements for Energy Certification is one of the action steps.
 - Much of Bolton is owned by the State of Vermont and therefore is not under the jurisdiction of Bolton's BLUDRs.
 - Much of the land suitable for energy siting is in the Conservation District.
 - Sharon Murray wondered if this was a high priority. The PC explained that rewriting the Bolton Land Use and Development Regulations (BLUDRs) was the highest priority.
 - In response to a question about the Vermont Land Trust, Carol Devlin handed out an updated table of conserved land in Bolton. 49% of Bolton's 26,520 acres is publicly owned (by local, state or federal government) with 38% (10,136 acres) owned by the State of Vermont.
 - Creating a volunteer position for an Energy Coordinator is one of the plan's action steps.
 - Sharon Murray raised concerns regarding the buffers for energy sites.

- Energy Resource Map
 - Leslie Pelch and Steve Barner shared concerns about the Energy Resources Map. Leslie will work with the CCRPC to double check the data.
- Bolton Valley
 - Sharon Murray would like to see a more specific list of actions for building a positive relationship between the town and Bolton Valley.
 - Deb Shelby pointed out that the town is not in a position to tell Bolton Valley what it needs to do to become a four seasons resort. Instead, the town has to react to Bolton Valley's decisions and actions.
 - Leslie Pelch suggested a group including both the town and Bolton Valley to discuss options and a general master plan. She also suggested that maybe the master plan could be worked out a little at a time.
 - Josh Arneson explained that developing master plans is prohibitively expensive and capital is better spent elsewhere.
 - Ralph Deslauriers explained that there had been master plans in the past. He also explained that the density at Bolton Valley has changed significantly over the decades as permanent homes have replaced vacation homes. He estimates that the percentages have switched from 80% vacation and 20% permanent to 20% vacation and 80% permanent.
 - Sharon Murray suggested the town and Bolton Valley working together on an economic development grant. She also said that Bolton Valley had a possibility for greater density through transfer density. Bolton Valley may transfer density from ski areas to the resort area; however, much of the land that could have been used for the transfer was sold to the State of Vermont. Building up is also a possible means of increasing density.
 - Rodney Pingree said there were two main obstacles to development at Bolton Valley: water availability and septic capacity. He also suggested changing the height restrictions at Bolton Valley if the obstacles are addressed. He would like to see a comparison of types of density at Bolton Valley over the years.
 - Joss Besse gave some history about changing the zoning. Bolton Valley was to have consolidated development at the base with increased density in the base area.
- Economic Resource Committee
 - The ERC took a break over the holidays and in January.
 - They are going to resume meeting on the 3rd Tuesday of the month beginning this month.
- Need for more volunteers.
- Sharon Murray that there is no need for a glossary.

The Planning Commission ended the public comment section of the hearing and said people could leave or stay. The PC continued the meeting for a few minutes to discuss the comments.

PC Discussion

The PC briefly discussed the meeting. The members were very pleased with the large turnout. They decided that Emily would edit the plan incorporating suggested changes and comments from the individuals, boards, CCRPC, the DHCD and the hearing. She will track the changes. The PC will then discuss the changes at their next meeting on Thursday, February 23, 2017. Carol Devlin noted that the Select Board has been invited to attend that meeting.

The PC was in agreement that they wanted the Town Plan to have a glossary.

The PC would like to see model language regarding the buffer for unnamed streams. This issue is more complicated than it appears because of the large number of intermittent streams.

Next Meeting

The Planning Commission will not be meeting on Monday, February 13, 2017 (its regularly scheduled meeting). Rather, it will have a special meeting on Thursday, February 23, 2017 to consider the changes to the Town Plan based on feedback and to approve the draft for submission to the Select Board.

Adjournment

Deb Shelby moved that the meeting be adjourned. Jim Bralich seconded. Motion carried (4-0). Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Carol Devlin
Clerk, Planning Commission

These minutes are unofficial until accepted.

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

For the Planning Commission