

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

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

December 11, 2006

Planning Commission members present: Linda Baker, Chair, Rodney Pingree, Jen Andrews, Jim Bralich, Steve Barner (6:25 p.m.)

Planning Commission members absent: none

Clerk: Amy Grover

Also present: Samantha Tilton, CCRPC, Sharon Murray DRB and Conservation Commission, Amy May, Conservation Commission, Larry Williams, Redstone, John Wakefield, Redstone

Agenda

1. Conservation Commission – Town Plan maps
 2. Bolton Valley Resort ~ Town Plan comments
 3. Town Plan Draft ~ ongoing review
 4. Minutes ~ October 16, 2006
 5. Other communications/mail
 6. Any other business
 7. Adjournment
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Call to Order

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

Agenda Item #1 ~ Conservation Commission ~ Town Plan Maps

Sharon Murray noted that she was there on behalf of the DRB and the Conservation Commission to ask that the PC consider adding an official “trails map” (including all VAST trails, Catamount trail, and Green Mountain trails) as part of the town plan, which would be a separately adopted regulation. Sharon noted that currently the DRB had no authority to require a r.o.w./easement for access to the extensive trail network within the town. An official map would give the DRB the ability to deny development, and protect access to the trail network within the DRB process, as a mechanism under state statute. Sharon noted that upon a denial, the town would have 120 days, either alone or in conjunction with another party to begin the process to purchase the easement/r.o.w. Sharon added that some developers see that as a positive, and that incentives are often a part of that process. If the town does not purchase the r.o.w./easement, the application could then come back before the DRB. Sharon noted that the entire process could take approximately 8 – 10 months.

Larry Williams stated that he saw it as a huge problem to have the town imposing trail easements on private landowners, and that it would change the dynamics from a collaborative process to essentially taking. Larry noted that Bolton Valley is currently working with the Catamount Trail Association for an easement along "Broadway," which would allow for the trail to be moved, and that Bolton Valley envisions a yurt system along the trail. Larry stated that if the town requires a particular location for a trail that could become a real problem. Jen Andrews stated that the clear guidelines within the process (trail map part of the town plan) would allow for more collaboration, as it would be understood from the start what the options were within the process. Sharon Murray stated that an official map would give the town the ability to negotiate, and that the regulations could provide incentives for dedication. Rodney Pingree noted that although current access for trails is in place, there is no protection for future access, which could change from landowner to landowner through the current verbal and/or year to year easements, and that inclusion of a trail map would give a very clear hierarchy on how to proceed. Larry Williams noted that he could see both sides of the issue, that he had also spent time with Ben Rose from the Green Mountain Club, and that he would love to see the Long Trail routed through Bolton, but that he felt it was important to have a balance between collaboration and taking and not create an adversarial relationship. Sharon Murray noted that the inclusion of the trail map would give landowners and developers notice that the trail network was important to the Bolton community, and added that input from both GMC and Catamount Trail on this issue might be helpful. Larry stated that the town must settle on a philosophy of how they want to do business.

Sam Tilton noted that she would ask Pam Brangan for a review of the current trail maps and to add known r.o.w./easements to the map.

Sharon Murray noted that she could provide draft language under Section 3.2 (f.) for the PC's consideration.

Linda Baker stated that the PC had asked the CC numerous times to develop/provide a natural resources inventory of the town. Sharon noted that she would forward that request to the rest of the CC, and that their focus had been working with the Preston Pond acquisition/trail network and completing a survey. Sharon noted that she would provide the results of the CC survey to the PC. Larry Williams noted that a natural resource inventory/mapping, and watershed assessment was part of the Bolton Valley Master Plan currently in progress. It was noted that the ad hoc committee would be reconvening to review Bolton Valley's master plan progress and provide input during the drafting stage.

Linda Baker noted that the issue was not something that the PC could decide on that evening, and that they would take the request for adding an official trails network map to the town plan under review. Linda noted for Amy to send out a reminder for the PC to thoroughly review Sharon's "Official Map" information prior to the next meeting.

Agenda Item #2 ~ Bolton Valley /Resort ~ Town Plan comments

The PC reviewed the letter dated November 3, 2006 from Larry Williams. Discussion included the following:

- Section 1.3 ~ Economy. The PC felt that recognizing the importance of BV to the economic health of the community had been achieved. Wrap references to businesses more generically so as not to exclude other businesses, i.e. “Work collaboratively with all businesses in our community to allow for economic health.” Sam to draft language change. Bolton Valley in agreement.
- Section 2.1 ~ 2nd paragraph, second sentence. BV asked that “shall remain undeveloped” be changed to “remain generally undeveloped.” Sam noted that the idea was to be more specific, as a “general” statement was so vague that it was useless. The PC concurred that areas can either be developed or not, not “generally” developed or not developed, and especially with respect to wetlands and floodplains. Sam suggested if the language is to be changed to be more specific, not less. Rodney suggested that draft language might include that development can occur in sensitive areas only if there are no other suitable areas within the parcel. Will continue to review.
- Section 2.1 ~ last sentence. Larry Williams asked that “slow” be changed to measured or timely, and added that what BV has to do is not impact the town. Jen stated that was impossible to do, everything would impact the town either positively or negatively. Draft language to reflect that development not adversely impact or cause undue impact. Bring the issue of sustainability with respect to tax rate and traffic to the development rate.
- Section 2.4 ~ Resort Residential District. Larry Williams stated this was no longer of concern, and to delete his comments on this portion.
- Section 2.7 ~ Forest District. Larry Williams asked that the language in this section be drafted as less restrictive with regard to development. After discussion the PC came to the consensus to continue with the review of this issue.
- Section 3.3 ~ Policies. Larry Williams asked that the town be more flexible with respect to development on steep slopes. Larry noted that the zoning regulations are explicit with the steep slopes percentages set, and asked that specific percentages not be set forth in the town plan. Linda Baker noted that ACT 250 looks at the town plan with regard to development, which is the reason why the percentages had been included. Linda added that the steep slopes issue is currently under review within the ad hoc committee in conjunction with Redstone, and that recommendations from the ad hoc committee will be taken under advisement by the PC
- Section 4.1 ~ Last paragraph with regard to I89 Bolton interchange, Larry Williams asked that the town plan support privately led efforts to promote the interchange. After discussion the PC came to the consensus that the plan cannot support private efforts, and that the current language supports future reassessments.

Agenda Item #3 ~ Town Plan Draft Ongoing Final Review

Tabled until the January 2007 meeting due to time constraints.

Agenda Item #4 – Minutes October 16, 2006

Jen Andrews made the motion to accept the minutes of October 16, 2006. Rodney Pingree seconded the motion. All were in favor, motion carried.

Agenda Item #5 - Other communications/mail

Samantha Tilton provided the PC with an informal staff review of the current draft of the town plan by a CCRPC senior planner.

Agenda Item #6 ~ Any other business

Linda Baker asked if there had been any resolution of the Bolton Valley/Bicknell Thrush land conservation. Amy Grover provided copies of the letter and map received by the town, noting that the conservation requirement had been fulfilled.

Amy Grover noted that the current town plan expires on 9/23/07. The PC reviewed the time line with respect to the CCRPC confirmation process, PC and Select Board hearing schedules, and calculated that the PC should begin the town plan hearing process by early or mid February 2007 to avoid the potential risk of not having a town plan in effect, i.e. new town plan not adopted before the current plan expires. The PC reached a consensus that because of the timeframe, the outcome/input from the ad hoc committee would not be received prior to beginning the hearing process. Linda Baker stated that she would personally call Larry Williams to notify him of the projected timeframe of the town plan hearing process.

The next meeting of the PC will be Monday, January 8, 2006 from 6 – 8 p.m. @ Smilie School.

Agenda Item #9 – Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Amy Grover
Clerk, Development Review Board
These minutes are unofficial until accepted.

These minutes were read and accepted by the Planning Commission on

_____, 2007

Linda Baker, Chair