



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, June 27, 2019
Approved Minutes

Present: Joe Wilson (presiding), Chuck Gregory, Char Osterlund, Judith Stern, Jesse Webster, Jen Gehly, Beth Gray, Michael Martin (ex officio), Walter Martone (ex officio)

Also present: Renee Vondle, Town Planner; David Solomon, Daniel Pettigrew, Eva-Maria Pettigrew, Barbara Volta, Steven Osterlund, Hallie Whitcomb, Greg Supernovich, Josephine Hingston

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed new Planning Commissioner, Jen Gehly to the commission.
2. **Requests by commissioners for additions to agenda:**
There were no additions requested.
3. **Public Comment – There was no public comment**
4. **Public Hearing: Energy Chapter amendment to the Town Plan**
Joe Wilson introduced the Enhanced Energy Plan, noting that it is a component of the Springfield Town Plan and was prepared in accordance with 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, Subchapter 5 written with the intent to address the requirements of Act 174 of 2016 and to meet the enhanced energy planning standards developed by the Vermont Department of Public Service. He noted that the Enhanced Energy Chapter was prepared based upon the Guidance for Municipal Energy Planning Standards in order for the Springfield Town Plan to be given greater weight in the Section 248 process. The SWCRPC assisted the Planning Commission with writing this chapter so that the Springfield Town Master Plan is informed with the Southern Windsor County Regional Plan. The State gave the Regional Planning Commission and town a 14-page checklist of criteria that needs to be met in the Town Plan in order for the town to have substantial deference in a public utilities hearing. Chair Wilson stated that substantial deference means if the town adheres to the plan and, if have developed a plan successfully, the town will have substantial deference in a public energy hearing by the Public Utilities Commission.

Char Osterlund gave a brief overview of the Energy Chapter, specifically noting that the Selectboard asked the PC to put in something relating to the baseline so that when Springfield develops high tech businesses, we will not be penalized for using more energy. The Selectboard also asked that a section of hydro energy be put in the plan and that the complete solar siting criteria from the Town Plan be put in the Energy Chapter as well.

Mr. Greg Supernovich, spoke in support of the Enhanced Energy Plan. He stated that he believes this plan will help our community begin to solve the climate change issue locally. He encouraged people to see the film Paris to Pittsburg which is a factual film from American climatologists.

Daniel Pettigrew, 879 French Meadow Road, commented on Criteria Number 2 from the Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Plan Amendments which states the long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on the municipal tax base and asked that when the town is reviewing a solar siting proposal the reduction of property values and taxes of all of the abutters should be given due consideration. He also cited the Springfield Town Plan dated 05 20 2019, draft Chapter 9 ... Enhanced Energy Plan on page 82 6D: Demonstrate the Municipality's Leadership by Example with Respect to the Efficiency of Municipal Buildings. Mr. Pettigrew encouraged the town hall, town police department and other town buildings to put solar on their buildings. Walter Martone noted that it is difficult to put solar panels on some of our old buildings, but stated that a solar field is going in at the Town gravel pit on Fairground Road that will benefit the town as well as another project the town is buying into and he believes that the town is at 70% green energy.

Chuck Gregory moved to accept the Enhanced Energy Chapter / Town Plan Amendment as presented. Char Osterlund seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

5. **Announcements** –A training for PC/DRB members is scheduled for Wednesday, July 17, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at Springfield Town Hall. All are encouraged to make the training and we will be joined by the Chester planning commission.
6. **Approve Minutes of June 5, 2019** – Continued
7. **Town Planners Report**
8. **Old Business**
 - A. **Phase I Town Zoning Bylaws (Review & Approve)**

The Commission reviewed the notes from Allison Hopkins, SWCRPC regarding the changes that the Selectboard requested the PC work on:

 1. Joe Wilson stated that the SB asked that Section 3.30 Public Utility Substations (Essential Services) be deleted. Town Planner, Renee Vondle informed the commission that Ms. Hopkins said that we could leave the definition of Essential Services in even though we are taking the Section 3.30 out. Joe Wilson polled the PC. It was decided to take the definition out as well.
 2. Section 3.36 Short Term Rentals (delete: In addition, home owners have the responsibility to comply with the Vermont Department of Taxes re: rooms and meals tax rules and regulations). This was based on a recommendation from the Town Attorney. Consensus was to delete this sentence.
 3. Section 3.20 Group Homes: language was changed to say that a state licensed or registered

group home serving not more than eight persons who are disabled as defined in 9 V.S.A. Section 4501 shall be considered (added in “by right”) as a permitted single-family dwelling unit. A residential care home (deleted: “or group home”) to be operated under state licensing or registration serving nine or more who have a handicap or disability as

4. defined in V.S.A. Section 4501, shall be reviewed as a multi-family dwelling and shall be subject to Conditional Use Review. Also, per state statute, “Such a dwelling must be at least 1000 feet from another dwelling being utilized for a similar purpose” was also added in. Chair Wilson noted that by adding “by right” to the Group Homes means it can be permitted by the ZA as an administrative permit. There was a consensus that the changes are acceptable.
5. New individual section for motor vehicle categories and an update to Section 3.32 Small Repair Services. Chair Wilson noted that Allison Hopkins added new definitions, updated the district charts and rewrote Section 3.32 which was Repair Services Excluding Automobile and is now “Small Repair Services”. Town Planner, Renee Vondle noted that the motor vehicle repair and/or service and motor vehicle sales and service has been separated out into three separate categories: Motor Vehicle Repair, Motor Vehicle Service and Motor Vehicle Sales and a new category has been added for small repair services. There was a consensus to approve these changes.
6. Section 5.4 Downtown Design Control Overlay Standards and Procedures
Allison Hopkins revised this section and took out a lot of the restrictive language. Town Planner, Renee Vondle reviewed the changes with the Planning Commission specifically noting:
 - a. Instituted a DR Minor function for the ZA to approve minor requests quickly.
 - b. The DDRC was renamed DDRAC to make it clear that their function is for advice and not judiciary.
 - c. “Product rendering” was added as a substitution for catalogue cutsheet, if necessary, depending on the level of intensity per the application submitted. Larger, more detailed applications would be required to submit catalogue cutsheets, but minor applications would be able to submit photographs or product renderings in lieu of catalogue cutsheets.
7. Municode - Walter Martone informed the commission that Municode has identified areas in the bylaws that need to be technically cleaned up. He stated that there are many places in the current draft that references “the Act” and Municode would like us to reference a specific state statute each time. He stated that this is important to stay consistent with the rest of the town ordinances. Each place that says “The Act” should be replaced with 24 V.S.A. Section _____. He has encouraged Allison to scan through the document to review Municode’s comments. Mike Martin noted that once the codification is adopted, all of our Section numbers will change. He noted that in our bylaws we refer Chapter 117, but we need to start using 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 every time. We need to preface it with 24 V.S.A.

Rooming House – Walter Martone stated that the sub definition “family unit” should not be there and he felt we should strike it. He did note that the wording of the family unit in

this sub definition is the approved wording that the Selectboard approved and town attorney recommended, but he believes it should not be part of the rooming house definition, but a stand-alone definition on page 111. Ms. Vondle clarified that the full stand-alone definition should be “One or more persons living, sleeping, cooking and eating on the same premises as a single housekeeping unit, not including a housekeeping unit being operated as a rooming house”. The PC agreed to deleting the sub definition in rooming house and changing the family unit definition in the overall definition section of the bylaws.

8. District Tables

Chair Wilson stated that the proposed district tables are clearer and easier to understand for the members of the DRB who are hearing the application request, for the applicant to be able to understand what they can and cannot do and what process they will need to take for their request and for the staff to direct applicants through the process.

Town Planner, Renee Vondle stated that the district charts have been adjusted to remove the asterisks from the Permitted Use columns by transferring the “uses” to the appropriate column requiring DRB hearing.

The PC discussed the heading of column 2 which previously only had Conditional Use Approval. The Town Planner is proposing to include “and/or Site Plan Approval, DDCOD Approval, Flood Hazard Approval, Variance, Subdivision (See Article 5.0 & Article 6.2). Char Osterlund asked if the word “approval” could be substituted for “review” to stay consistent with Section 5.2 Site Plan Review Standards and Procedures.

The PC discussed all the tables and made corrections.

9. Electronic Message Display - Chuck Gregory introduced the proposed Electronic Message Display bylaw questionnaire and responses that were worked on via email and noted that it was historical data from previous work done at other meetings. Discussion followed regarding how to review this section. Town Planner, Renee Vondle stated that she correlated the questionnaire and responses, minutes from other meetings, notes from Regional Planner, Jason Rasmussen and Attorney, Stephen Ankuda and created the clean copy provided for this meeting.

Chair Wilson recommended that the definition of illuminance be left out.

The Commission discussed how many lines of characters should be allowed. It was noted that at the meeting on March 13, the commission agreed to delete the proposed 3-line limit and not limit it. Town Planner, Renee Vondle stated that the DRB will need some guidance of how much to allow and she noted that at a previous meeting Chuck Gregory stated that the more lines you allow, the smaller the letters get and the more dangerous it becomes for the traveling public. Char Osterlund stated that she felt the 3-line limit was too restrictive. Chair Wilson stated that if we don't limit it, then they can have 12 lines on there and the DRB will have nothing to say about it. Discussion followed. Judith Stern recommended leaving it at 3 lines and the PC agreed.

The PC discussed the maximum total sign area: “The area occupied by the message on an electronic message display may comprise no more than fifty (50) percent of the maximum total allowable sign area.” Chair Wilson noted that the applicant must draw a box around the whole sign to figure the total sq. footage of the sign. The display area must be 50% of the entire sign. Chair Wilson stated that this document was created from research done by

Chuck Gregory and Beth Gray and staff has gone to other towns to see what works. He stated that he felt this was the simplest, most straight forward and unencumbered EMD bylaw that we can utilize in Springfield, keeping in mind that we don’t want billboards in Vermont. He noted that there are reasons for all the items 1-15 which include not being overly demonstrative, not being a safety hazard and being allowed for schools and the municipality.

Maximum color was discussed. Town Planner, Renee Vondle informed the commission of Attorney Ankuda’s suggestion: “A maximum of two colors shall be used for an electronic message or at the discretion of the Development Review Board.” Attorney Ankuda stated that this will allow flexibility for instances of holiday messages such as a flag on the 4th of July and that discussions regarding color can take place during testimony in a DRB hearing. He also encouraged the PC to keep the bylaw simple because it is just for school and municipal properties. The PC agreed to Attorney Ankuda’s suggestion for maximum colors.

The PC discussed the height and total square footage standard. Town Planner noted that Regional Planner, Jason Rasmussen is recommending that both be included in this bylaw. Staff recommendation is a maximum height of ten feet and maximum square footage of 32 sq. ft. The proposed standard: “An EMD sign shall not exceed a maximum of 32 square feet and shall be a maximum height of 10 feet.” The height is calculated from the ground level to the top of the sign. The PC agreed to the standard as proposed.

Dwell time/frequency change of not more than once every 45 seconds was agreed upon.

Town Planner, Renee Vondle informed the PC that Regional Planner, Jason Rasmussen is recommending that we have a standard for allowance of one sign for lot and specify that the sign shall consist of two components. A traditional sign (top) and the electronic message display (bottom). The PC agreed to these two standards.

The PC discussed formatting of the nonconforming signage standard. Town Planner will reformat the standard per direction of PC.

Char Osterlund moved to accept the Draft Zoning Bylaws as corrected and amended and to set the date of the PC public hearing for July 10, 2019. Jesse Webster seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

Char Osterlund moved to send the Energy Chapter to the Selectboard. Chuck Gregory seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

XII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee L. Vondle
Recording Secretary/Town Planner