



**TOWN OF STOWE
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
May 15, 2023**

The Town of Stowe Planning Commission held a meeting on **Monday May 15, 2023**, starting at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Stowe Town Office with remote participation available via Zoom. The meeting began at 5:30 pm.

Members present included Mila Lonetto, Bob Davison, Brian Hamor, Neil Percy, Chuck Ebel, Jill Anne, Heather Snyder. Also present was Sarah McShane (staff), Ken Belliveau (planning consultant), [see sign-in sheet for members of the public who attended in-person.]

The meeting was called to order by Chair M.Lonetto at 5:30 pm.

Adjustments to the Agenda & Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items

M.Lonetto made a motion, seconded by B.Hamor, to adjust the agenda to include introductions of new Commission members. The motion passed unanimously.

Introductions

M.Lonetto explained that the Selectboard recently appointed one new regular member Jill Anne, and two new non-voting members Heather Snyder and John Muldoon. Members welcomed them to the Commission. J.Muldoon was unable to attend but will be at upcoming meetings.

Review Prior Meeting Minutes [05/01/2023]

On a motion by B.Davison, seconded by B.Hamor, the meeting minutes from the prior meeting were approved as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentation- Bylaw Modernization Grant

M.Lonetto provided an overview of the project thus far and introduced Planning Consultant Ken Belliveau. K.Belliveau explained the process and actions taken thus far and provided a presentation of the recommended zoning amendments discussed by the Commission as part of the Bylaw Modernization Grant. He explained that the purpose of the project is to evaluate the current zoning regulations and identify opportunities for the development of housing within the designated downtown and lower village center. His presentation highlighted the boundaries of the designated downtown and lower village centers, other designated growth centers, the existing development pattern and land uses, identified the character of the study area being a mix of historic buildings, both single story and multi-story buildings, and a range of building types. He explained that the focus of the project has been the VC-10 & LVC districts and the Commission has purposefully not evaluated the VIL-PUD district given the complexity of the district. He shared the Commission's vision and goals for these areas and recommended amendments to dimensional standards and parking requirements. He explained what dimensional requirements are and what they regulate and an overview of ideas the Commission would like the community to consider including requiring multi-story buildings, covered parking when feasible, eliminating building coverage, reducing setbacks, etc. He explained that all over the country there is an effort to reduce or eliminate parking requirements in growth centers; he highlighted items to consider and ways to simplify and reduce parking requirements. He explained the existing density requirements and the density distinctions between single-family dwelling, duplex, multi-family dwellings. He briefly discussed the requirements of S.100 which was recently passed by the State legislature and how that may impact the density of these areas. Following his presentation the Commission took questions and

comments. [The following is a summary of comments received. A recording of the full meeting is available for viewing on www.townofstowevt.org.]

Hal Stevens spoke and explained that he owns property behind the Stowe Inn. He raised the issue of access and whether village areas need to be served by a 50' right-of-way; he mentioned water and sewer utility constraints.

Marina Meerberg spoke and noted her appreciation for the need to build up while balancing the sense of community. She supports requirements for pitched roofs in order to retain a sense of place and opportunities to avoid three story square buildings. She asked if more a dense community is allowed, how can we assure it will serve our community and the need for workforce housing. She shared concerns about short-term rentals.

Mike Pudicumb inquired about density requirements and the recent passage of state legislation. He asked whether the Commission's goal is to have both the village and lower village be the same. M.Lonetto responded similarly, but not the same. He felt that pitched roofs should not be mandated and that different roof types/building forms should be allowed.

Karen (*last name unknown*) explained that she owns the Callagy Building, a commercial building across from Stowe Dance Academy. She explained her property is so close to the road that the windows on the first and second floor get dirty. She also reported parking challenges with Air B & B guests and Stowe Dance visitors using her property.

Margaret Freedom asked whether it was part of the study to present visual examples from other communities that have made similar zoning changes done well and examples that were not so well done. She emphasized that she felt the variation of setbacks, not uniformity, builds character. M.Lonetto encouraged participants to send examples of what they like and what they do not like to the Commission. K. Belliveau can also pull together a few visual examples.

Josh (*iphone*) inquired about the proposed density changes. M.Lonetto responded that the state legislature recently approved density mandates for municipalities throughout the state. K. Belliveau added that the lower village is designed to be similar to what is in the village.

Dave Latchrup inquired about parcels that contain lands within multiple zoning districts and ADUs.

Joe Miles commented that he has a business on Sylvan Park Road with shared access with the next-door business. He reported that the shared access for the two properties works well. His property contains two full year dwellings - he inquired about shared parking. He intends on redeveloping the property in the future and will retain the units and add more if they can. He commented about the need to be able to situate buildings that do not interfere with other nearby uses.

Bruce Njouran commented that at the Commodores property in the lower village he would like to see the regulations allow for an increase in building height in order to have parking below the building; he would be willing to increase the building setback in order to have a greater building height.

Bob Bleimeister commented that he owns property on Maple Street; he inquired whether there could be an opportunity for the regulations to allow a greater building height for properties not on Main Street so long as they do not exceed the building heights on Main Street. He suggested for the Commission to develop architectural standards. M.Lonetto responded that there are architectural standards in place for the village.

Billy Adams commented that he owns property on Cemetery Road. He noted that the parking requirements per S.100 also should be considered. He added that there should be a community conversation regarding how to increase municipal parking to support housing and parking along the street. He added that S.100 also contains an added floor allowance which will increase building height and density.

Terry Weise commented on the need for programs to make sure local working people can live here. She supports 55+ and independent housing. She shared her experiences from other places she has visited.

Larry Lackey commented that he owns property on the corner of Park and Pond Streets and the main restraint for his property was the parking requirements. He feels there is a higher demand for residential uses in the village and has concerns that any increase in density and building height will be used by lodging and short-term rentals. He reported that any increase in density should be for year-round housing or be limited to residents from Lamoille County but he wasn't sure how it would be administered.

Jamie (*last name unknown*) noted that she lives on Sylvan Park Road and is surrounded by abandoned houses and short-term rentals. She commented on the need to define housing to be long-term and shared concerns on how it impacts the neighborhood and entire town. She added it is hard to have a family with "*air b and b'ers*" traveling fast on the road.

Emily Rosenbaum provided comments on parking and recent Census data. She shared her support for reduced parking requirements. She reported that the recent Census data showed a high percentage of Stowe residents that worked at the place of residence and do not own a vehicle.

Terry Weise shared an Aspen Ski Company program involving housing purchased at non-market value. M.Lonetto responded there are a ton of similar examples but there is currently not a local program/structure to implement such programs yet. Commissioner B.Hamor added that he supports looking for opportunities to partner with the town to encourage more housing diversity.

Catherine Crawley suggested for the Regulations to allow solar on roof tops in the village and encourage alternate ways to heat homes. Staff responded that solar generating facilities connected to the public grid are currently exempt from municipal zoning.

Catherine Drake spoke in appreciation of increasing density but only if it serves the community.

Marina Meerberg commented on the possibility of considering both solar as a form of energy and covered parking; for both residential and visitor parking.

Mike Puddecumb suggested using the village center core as a test area where short-term rentals could be located and limited.

Larry Lackey responded to the comment about potentially increasing the building height requirements off Main Street. He noted that there is an approximate elevation difference of ten feet and an increase in building height off Main Street would not impact Main Street. He suggested the Commission consider looking at increasing building height when the setback is also increased.

M.Lonetto shared comments regarding walkability, streetscapes, vision, and goals. She added they must further consider the missing middle, Affordable housing, workforce housing, year-round housing, etc.

Billy Adams suggested that the community's housing needs should be quantified and asked if the Planning Commission could model out these proposed zoning changes- is the community potentially gaining a certain number of housing units. Will this effectuate major change or minor change? K.

Belliveau responded that the study areas are primarily looking at in-fill development projects and the area contains a lot of historically significant buildings that are not likely to be demolished. He mentioned it would be challenging to develop a number that would be meaningful. Billy Adams mentioned prior proposed amendments which mapped and quantified the density changes for each property.

B.Davison added that there are not that many development opportunities in the study area, properties are likely to be redeveloped. K. Belliveau added that the underdeveloped properties could be assessed for what they could be should the proposed changes become in effect and the assumptions would model it under the multi-family dwelling density.

B.Davison commented about requiring the developer to pay/contribute to a fund for municipal parking. Members then discussed impact fees. K. Belliveau suggested it is an idea worth looking into. N.Percy suggested it may require an increased cost or subsidizing water and sewer connection.

B.Davison shared comments on municipal parking garage/deck.

Members discussed affordable housing developments and AMI. K. Belliveau added that the 30% also includes utilities. There was general discussion on affordable housing and different ideas for solutions.

In summary M.Lonetto suggested the Commission review comments from this evenings meeting and compare them with the recommendations thus far. The next meeting agenda will include a summary of public comments and evaluation of the affordable housing density bonus.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 5th.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McShane, Planning & Zoning Director