



**TOWN OF STOWE
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2024**

The Town of Stowe Planning Commission held a regular meeting on **Monday October 21, 2024**, starting at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Stowe Town Office with remote participation via Zoom. The meeting began at 5:30 pm. Members present included Brian Hamor, Mila Lonetto, Heather Snyder, Bob Davison, John Muldoon, Jill Anne, and Neil Percy. Municipal staff Sarah McShane was also present. Guests Erika Skinner, Terrie ____, Sheri Baraw Smith, and Elizabeth Bennedict were also in attendance.

Called to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair B.Hamor at approximately 5:30 PM.

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

None

Review Prior Meeting Minutes [10/07/2024]

C.Ebel motioned to approve the meeting minutes from October 7th as submitted. B.Davison seconded. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Education Subcommittee Update

B.Davison provided an update on the recent Education Subcommittee meeting. He shared several interesting ideas from the meeting, particularly around identifying areas where school and community needs overlap—most notably in terms of facilities. He also highlighted the connection between economically disadvantaged students, the availability of affordable housing, and student diversity. He reported that during the subcommittee meeting, it was discussed that Stowe schools have the physical space/capacity to increase enrollment. C.Ebel highlighted a recent WCAX article regarding demographics, population decline, student enrollment, etc. J.Muldoon explained there are conversations happening across the state regarding responsible increases to classroom sizes, school spending, costs per pupil, etc. N.Percy inquired whether the Town could purchase school building(s) and rent them back to the school system. M.Lonetto inquired about the costs to educate students. The group discussed student capacity and enrollment. J.Anne inquired about a lottery system for enrollment; J.Muldoon responded there is a system to attend schools outside of one's district but it is complex. B.Hamor inquired about facilities improvements and how those expenses could possibly be shared. H.Snyder added that the town recently purchased a generator since the high school is the town's emergency shelter. J. Muldoon explained how there needs to be a direct linkage between the community and school needs for the project. He also mentioned that the subcommittee also discussed local education successes including graduation rates and testing results. H.Snyder inquired about forming an academy but the topic was not discussed during the subcommittee meeting. Members noted that 85% of the school budget is personnel, and the facilities portion relatively small portion. The Education Subcommittee will hold five or so meetings throughout the fall/early winter; subcommittee members will continue to report back to the Commission following each of their meetings.

Continued Discussion: Town Plan Update: Next Steps for Settlement Pattern Goals, Policies, Tasks

During the last meeting, the Commission discussed developing a settlement pattern/land use goal. Chair Hamor previously sked Commission members to consider a format for the conversations and to share their ideas. S.McShane suggested that she work with the Chair prior to the meeting to develop general question(s) for the group to consider. She could then work with a Commission member to wordsmith draft language to share at the following meeting. B.Davison read his suggested goal language for settlement pattern/land use. N.Percy suggested that the goal language should also describe the character to be preserved. M.Lonetto suggested to reverse engineer the goal by having a brainstorming visioning session. Members discussed whether the overall intent is to 'limit' or 'manage' growth and whether a temporary development moratorium is needed. Members shared various perspectives and viewpoints. Members discussed why they felt a temporary moratorium is needed, i.e., to allow the Town Plan to be completed, work on water and sewer issues, address housing issues, etc. Erika Skinner shared public comments regarding Act 47 and the community's workforce. Members discussed workforce housing, seasonal housing, etc. Members continued to discuss whether growth needs to be 'limited' and/or 'balanced'. N.Percy voiced his preference on offering incentives and density bonuses rather than instituting requirements that a certain percentage of units be affordable. M. Lonetto suggested that relying on market forces alone for housing development does not work in Stowe, she shared her support for inclusionary zoning. J.Muldoon mentioned how the housing market is distorted in Stowe, compared to surrounding areas, and when markets are distorted municipalities need to intervene. N.Percy suggested a carrot and stick approach might work. He supports the existing settlement pattern goal which encourages development in the town centers, while preserving the rural areas. Members discussed water and sewer constraints and municipal services. C.Ebel mentioned how Boulder, Colorado used a temporary moratorium to allow time to figure out the issues. Members discussed traffic and the cost of housing. J.Muldoon shared his transportation experiences from western resort communities. Members discussed the bus schedule and need for improvements. Members continued discussion regarding creating a vision for settlement patterns/land use. B.Hamor felt it might be helpful to have a map labeling areas where water and sewer utilities are available and for the group to work towards identifying future growth nodes and evaluating traffic routes – to understand where we can grow in the future. B.Hamor asked the Commission to consider other western mountain resort towns and the Commission's vision for Stowe. Members discussed future redevelopment of the village and other areas for schools, housing, the transfer station, utilizing existing facilities, etc. S.McShane suggested that the Commission may want to consider discussing developing a future land use map. She can prepare a map for discussion highlighting sewer service district areas, municipal water, and zoning districts. B.Davison added that with Stowe's traffic, water and sewer issues, and growth pressures, it's an opportune time to prepare a town plan. Members asked if community comments could be posted online. S.McShane can compile and post online.

Updates/Correspondence/Other Business

Other Business – Official Map

Members reserved time to discuss the official map and Spruce Peak's recent request that the Commission consider eliminating the road connecting Cottage Club and Cape Cod roads. B.Davison shared that he is not in favor of amending the map. Members discussed the process involving the DRB

and Selectboard. N.Percy recommended allowing it to go through the process and that a connector road at this location might be a good thing. C.Ebel shared that he is not in favor of the connector road but admitted he lives on the road which impacts his perspective. Sheri Baraw Smith spoke on the matter and discussed how her property is within the area that could be impacted. M.Lonetto assured S.Baraw-Smith that the Commission is aware of her concerns but felt that the Commission does not have enough information at this time to recommend eliminating the road. She felt conceptually it might not be a bad idea but was not sure how it would be implemented. J.Muldoon agreed that the Commission does not have enough information to make a recommendation. S.McShane explained that the Commission has been requested whether to amend the Official Map, the Commission is not required to make a recommendation to the Selectboard. She added that given the project is likely to end up in court and ultimately will require the Selectboard decision-making, it is not appropriate for DPW Director to comment on it. She explained that the Commission could either table the issue or take action by deciding to initiate steps to recommend amending the official map or choose not to take any immediate action at this time. Following discussion, N.Percy made a motion not to act on the request to remove the identified right-of-way connecting Cape Cod and Cottage Club roads on the Official Map. B.Davison seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 6-0-1. C.Ebel abstained. The Commission will take no action on the request to amend the official map.

Community Engagement Project Update

S.McShane provided the Commission with a brief community engagement update. The community survey was recently launched, and hundreds of community input cards have been received. Additional engagement events are planned for November 7th as well as participation at the upcoming barn dance and other events.

General Updates & Correspondence

None

Review Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Next PC Meeting Date- November 4, 2024.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McShane, Planning & Zoning Director

Parking Lot Ideas/Topics for Further Discussion

Map of town-owned properties (done)

Review plans of adjacent communities and regional plan

~~Review zoning districts, purposes, overlay districts—~~

Develop map showing residential development activity (in progress)

Develop map showing location of homestead properties

Review requested zoning amendment/ADU's for duplexes.

Stormwater Utility District – Bob's list of recommendations