

**Town Of Newfane, Vermont
Planning Commission (PC)**

Regular Meeting Minutes

January 23, 2020

Call to order 6:09 PM

Commissioners in Attendance: Ken Estey, Lynn Forrest, Bob McCandless (by telephone)

Members of the public: Walt Dadik (DRB), Margaret Wimberger, Kevin Miner, Debbie Barry, Erica Walch, Patricia Johnson, Meg Gonzalez (West River Thrives)

Introductions

Additions to the Agenda: No additions.

Minutes: The minutes from the December 12, 2019 Public Hearing and Regular Meeting were approved as amended.

Unscheduled Members of the Public: Meg Gonzalez, the new Director of West River Valley Thrives, introduced herself. The purpose of WRVT is to help support healthy and vibrant communities. She presented the book "Planning for Prevention" and informed the Commission that WRVT has an office in Leland & Grey Middle/High School.

Old Business:

Bylaw amendment to allow natural green burials in Resource Districts: Ken said he spoke with Wannetta Powling, Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard. She will let him know the date of the Selectboard's hearing on the bylaw amendment to allow natural green burials in Resource Districts.

Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP): Bob explained the benefits of the EEP. He had met with Marion Major at Windham Regional Commission who said the draft met the requirements. Ken will contact Marion to see if there are other benchmarks and associated deadlines so as not to lose ground. Otherwise, further work on the EEP will wait until Bob returns in April.

Setback bylaw revision: Walt explained the need for revision to the setback rules. The town zoning bylaws have setback standards based on the 20th century because many of Newfane's houses were built in the 18th and 19th centuries. The DRB is finding that the most frequent requests for building variances are regarding setbacks, which are usually granted if the build doesn't change the characteristic of the neighborhood and there is no practical alternative. Lynn will contact David Cotton and ask that the DRB draft a revised bylaw by the end of March.

6:55pm Commission took a recess in order to wait for members of the public interested in Short-term Rentals who would be arriving according to the 7:06 time on the agenda.

7:06pm: Commission reconvened

Short-Term Rental (STR) Bylaw revision: Ken summarized the history of the Planning Commission's involvement with STRs such as AirBnB. The people attending had many questions regarding potential rules for STRs, such as "Why are there rules?" "Was there a problem?" "Is the town trying to make money from the \$30 permit fees?"

There was a lively discussion regarding the plusses and minuses of STRs, the zoning differences between a BnB and a lodge, how additional income from renting a room help people afford their taxes, the effect of running a STR on owners' property taxes, commercial versus non-commercial business, how a non-resident owners' repairs can help fix up properties and the potential long-term effects on communities.

Bob explained that the purpose of zoning regulations was to protect the STR owner and the town. Lynn passed out sample rules from Prescott, AZ for attendees to read and give their opinions to the commission. The Next Steps will be to hear feedback from attendees and continue research and discussions on STRs.

Planning Commission membership update:

Ken said that Tim Shortell has withdrawn his request to be on the commission. Margaret Wimberger is attending for two weeks to see if she would want to be on the commission. Kevin Miner also attended as a potential commissioner. Maia Segura is interested in serving on the commission, but will not be able to attend until February 27 because of business commitments.

New Business:

Flood hazard bylaw amendment and river corridor protection: Ken explained the possibility of amending the bylaw. If the town were to adopt a river corridor protection bylaw, it would receive additional 2 ½% of state disaster funding.

Upcoming trainings, seminars, statewide meetings

Ken said that the town supports commissioners in attending trainings and the commission would encourage new members to attend. The following are some upcoming trainings:

Wednesday, April 8 – Town Officers Education Conference, Fairlee

Thursday, April 9th – AARP Placemaking, Middlebury, Ken & Lynn will attend, Bob may attend

Thursday, May 28th – Southern Vermont Economic Summit, Mount Snow

Tuesday, June 9th – VLCT Spring Planning & Zoning Conference, Fairlee

Climate Catalyst: Community Leadership Program

Lynn said she would not be able to apply for this program due to the late notification.

Bob made a motion to adjourn at 8:30. Lynn seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by: Lynn C Forrest

Posting locations: Newfane Town Office / Williamsville Post Office / WW Building Supply / Newfane Market.

Town of Newfane website:

[HTTP://newfanevt.com/meetings/meeting-schedules/](http://newfanevt.com/meetings/meeting-schedules/)

[HTTP://newfanevt.com/meetings/planning-commission-minutes/](http://newfanevt.com/meetings/planning-commission-minutes/)