



Village of Manchester, Vermont

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission Held November 16th, 2022 at 11:00am

Members Present: Chair Rich Heilemann, Vice-Chair Audrey Kolloff, Anthony MacLaurin, Christie Bronstein, Renee Waller, Tom Scarnecchia, Eric Dorsch

Member(s) Absent: Renee Waller

Others Present: Zoning Administrative Officer Curan VanDerWielen, President of the Board of Trustees Tom Deck

The meeting was held both in person at the Village Office and via zoom.

Rich Heilemann called the meeting to order at 11:00am.

Minutes:

Approve the draft minutes of both the regular and special meetings of October 19th, 2022.

Christie Bronstein motioned to approve the draft minutes for the regular meeting of October 19th 2022. Anthony MacLaurin seconded the motion. The Planning Commission (PC) then unanimously approved the draft minutes.

Planned Business:

Continued Discussion on Bylaw Modernization and Affordable Housing

Heilemann began the by reminding the PC of Cat Bryars' recent departure from the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) and indicated that it was widely believed that Janet Hurley, the former Zoning and Planning Administrator in Manchester Center, would be taking over her position. Several clarifying questions were asked about her future role and how the BCRC staff transition would affect the Village's timeline on Bylaw Modernization. Heilemann indicated that this would stymie any planned discussion on the matter today, aside from a brief update from Curan VanDerWielen.

Heilemann then invited VanDerWielen to offer some remarks on internal research and goal-setting regarding the topic. VanDerWielen introduced some of the internal research he had conducted concerning the nationwide and statewide affordable housing crises and had re-reviewed the recommendations Bryars had made earlier this year regarding the content of the Bylaw Modernization process. VanDerWielen then stated that he wished to compile some basic statistical data specific to the Village from federal and state sources to better contextualize further discussion. VanDerWielen also emphasized his belief in the importance of goalsetting for the PC as it moved forward with its discussion. VanDerWielen finished by stating that, as expected,

permitting and other regular items were beginning to slow over the past few weeks, leaving him more time to work on special projects and planning items throughout the winter months. Heilemann then asked whether anyone wished to alter the December 21st regular meeting date for the PC, given its proximity to Christmas and likely vacation time. No members commented and the regular meeting date remained unchanged.

Continued Discussion on Short-Term Rentals

Heilemann began by indicating that the Town of Manchester had recently approved of the Short-Term Rental (STR) study which the Village had signed on for in July of 2022. Tom Deck clarified that the Village had signed an agreement to share expenses during their most recent Board of Trustees meeting. Both Heilemann and Deck indicated that they were not aware of the timeline with regard to the study proceeding. A short discussion ensued, during which the objectives of the study and the likely results were reviewed. MacLaurin emphasized the importance of this research in supporting the local hospitality industry and the effects of STRs on the market. Heilemann commented that he believed incorporating the input of a diverse group of local stakeholders would be important as the Village continued its research and crafting of potential regulations. VanDerWielen stated that he believed both points were important as the PC moved forward. Tom Scarnecchia asked several clarifying questions concerning the methodology and likely outcome of the joint STR study, which VanDerWielen answered.

Discussion on BCRC Transportation Study, Cycling and Pedestrian Safety, and Nex Steps

The discussion transitioned to discuss the BCRC transportation study. MacLaurin asked about the status of coordination with the Town of Manchester on improving cycling safety. Heilemann recounted several discussions with Mark Anders and Leslie Perra before detailing information on two possible options for federal grant applications within the next year. While the second opportunity for a grant application would not open until next Spring, the first would be due to apply for by December 14th, 2022, and would consist of a \$60,000 award with a 80/20 split. Heilemann also indicated the need for Board of Trustees approval before an application could be submitted. Deck indicated that he thought filing an application for the first grant opportunity was a good idea. Heilemann also mentioned a potential grant mentioned by Anders which would be filed through the Vermont Department of Transportation (VTRANS), although it had not yet been announced.

Bronstein asked if a grant could cover more than the stretch of road stretching from the Equinox Hotel to the Town line, referring specifically to a possible extension of the bicycle lane proposed under the BCRC report to Prospect Street. Heilemann responded that he had spoken with Anders about a possible extension of the project overall, but Anders had replied that it would likely overcomplicate the project. Bronstein asked if further study could be conducted concerning an extension's feasibility and described the need for additional pedestrian and cycling pathways near Prospect Street. MacLaurin asked whether Perra had signaled to Heilemann if the Town Selectboard would approved of the joint-project. Heilemann indicated that he believed there was interest, but no clear indication had been made to him. At this point, Eric Dorsch stated that he

supported the grant application before stepping out of the meeting. Bronstein asked if the project could be phased to include other stretches of road after work had begun. Heilemann stated that he believed the PC should continue with Anders' advice, but that he could speak with him about the matter. VanDerWielen offered that another grant at a later date could cover an extension of the project once the Village and Town had tackled the initial proposal. Deck commented that he had already had a lot of good feedback from other Board members and that the only concern was the possibility of a cost spiral, as he understood many infrastructure projects run over-budget. Otherwise, Deck emphasized that he thought it was a good idea and would look to have it added to the next regular Board agenda.

Bronstein motioned to forward approval of the preparation of a joint application with the Town via BCRC to fund the study of and possible implementation of cycling lanes on Main Street. MacLaurin seconded the motion. The PC then unanimously approved the motion. Bronstein commented that she believed that the project should be looked at again once started to see if it were possible to secure future funding for an extension of the cycling lanes. MacLaurin stated that he believed a possible connection to Burr and Burton Academy should also be explored at a later date. A short discussion ensued regarding the treacherousness of biking along Main Street, the value of studying an extension beyond Main Street at a future date, possible alternatives to a Main Street bike lane, and the likelihood of the Town of Manchester Selectboard approving the joint grant application.

Draft Letter to Homeowners Regarding Energy Chapter and Solar Siting

Heilemann gave Kolloff the floor to discuss the draft letter to homeowners regarding solar energy siting under the Plan of Development. Kolloff walked the Commission through the draft letter, noting the use of consistent graphic design to that of existing Energy Plan documentation and reading through the draft language. Kolloff suggested adding a list of properties or Parcel IDs for reference to property owners. Heilemann stated that he believed the attached map was unclear and might prove more confusing than using a list of property owners alone. A discussion ensued on how to properly arrange a list of property owners relevant to the letter, what the criteria for becoming a 'preferred site' would be, and how a waiver process might function for solar siting. The discussion concluded with the Commission agreeing that the property list would be arranged similarly to Heilemann's existing property list, that the criteria would be set as being located within the General Review Design Review Sub-District and to be sited with adequate screening, and that a waiver process would be handled either by DRB or the administrative staff.

Other Business

VanDerWielen asked about the status of the creation of the Energy Committee, noting that several new projects were brought to his attention recently and prompted the need for the Committee soon. A short discussion ensued concerning the parameters, procedure of, and purpose of the Energy Committee. Heilemann suggested scheduling a meeting between himself, Kolloff, and VanDerWielen to hammer out details in the coming weeks. Heilemann, Kolloff, and VanDerWielen then agreed to meet sometime after Thanksgiving for such a purpose.

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was closed at 12:06pm.

The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission will be held on December 21st, 2022, at 11:00am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Curan VanDerWielen, Zoning Administrative Officer