



# Village of Manchester, Vermont

## Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission Held December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022 at 11:00am

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

**Member(s) Absent:** Eric Dorsch

**Others Present:** Zoning Administrative Officer Curan VanDerWielen, Janet Hurley

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 November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022.*

Anthony MacLaurin motioned to approve the draft meeting minutes of November 16<sup>th</sup>. Heilemann seconded the motion. The Planning Commission then unanimously approved the draft minutes.

### **Planned Business:**

*Update on the Southern Vermont Economy Project Housing Conference*

Heilemann began by introducing Curan VanDerWielen's recent attendance for the Southern Vermont Economy Project's recent Housing Conference. VanDerWielen then provided a brief overview of several major takeaways from the event, including information on local and regional funding incentives, non-profit development programs, community education efforts, local bylaw and plan of development changes, and key trends in both the long-term and short-term rental markets for housing. Heilemann mentioned he had spoken with VanDerWielen about many of these items and it believed that many of these points would be helpful for the Commission's ongoing discussion.

A short discussion ensued concerning important points from the Conference. MacLaurin asked about landlord education events and anecdotes about community education at the Conference. Heilemann spoke about some of the key market insights drawn from the Conference. At this point in time, Audrey Kolloff entered the meeting.

*Continued Discussion on Short-Term Rentals*

As the Commission looked for Janet Hurley's input on the affordable housing discussion, Heilemann indicated that they would proceed out of order on the agenda to briefly discuss any

updates on the Short-Term Rental discussion. Tom Scarnecchia asked about the connection between the affordable housing shortage and Short-Term Rentals (STRs) and followed up concerning the nature of the contract for a study between the Village and Manchester Center. Heilemann indicated that a contract to share expenses on the STR study had been signed by the Board of Trustees. A discussion ensued concerning the goals and methodology of the study, with VanDerWielen indicating that it would remain within the scope of the documents provided to the Trustees in July, although he had not spoken directly with the contractor. At this point in time, Janet Hurley, Assistant Director of Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC), entered the meeting. Heilemann asked who the contractor was, and Hurley answered that it was Doug Kennedy.

#### *Continued Discussion on Affordable Housing*

Heilemann recapped the conversation on affordable housing and potential alterations to the Village Zoning Bylaws since Cat Bryars' original presentation several months prior. Heilemann also noted for the Commissioners that Hurley, in succeeding Bryars, would be working with the Village in a similar capacity to facilitate some of the necessary changes in the Bylaws. Heilemann then gave the floor to Hurley to introduce herself and her involvement in this process. Hurley gave a brief overview of BCRC's involvement in the process, noting its tie to the Municipal Bylaw Modernization Grant and focuses on improving clauses regarding density and parking. Hurley also mentioned Manchester Center's Adaptive Reuse Provision as possible model for the conversion of non-residential properties.

Heilemann asked Hurley about timeline for BCRC's proposed changes, to which Hurley responded that she was busy with a project in Arlington and would probably reapproach the Village later in 2023. MacLaurin asked if there was a checklist for statutory changes that needed to be made to the Village Zoning Bylaws, and Hurley pointed to a guide published by a state agency and Bryars' previous report on affordable housing as introduced several months prior. Heilemann commented that the Commission had already reviewed both documents. A short discussion then ensued during which changes to how Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) could be zoned were recently made in statute, a possible joint meeting between PC and Development Review Board (DRB) on existing Bylaw revision drafts, and Hurley's suggestion for a Neighborhood Development Area to be established.

#### *Continued Discussion on Cycling and Pedestrian Safety*

Heilemann then reintroduced the discussion on improving cycling and pedestrian safety before updating the Commission on several discussions he had held with the BCRC and Manchester Center about obtaining a grant for a study on installing bicycle lanes down Main Street. Heilemann also stated that while the PC had obtained permission from the Board of Trustees to pursue a grant opportunity for a study, it was likely to be slated for a future application and not for the more recent application periods mentioned during the most recent Trustees meeting. Heilemann also referenced a meeting with the chairs of Manchester Center's PC and DRB, Town Manager, and Mark Anders of BCRC he had participated in recently during which a tentative timeline for

applying for a grant in April had been set and where it had been discussed to potentially extend the cycling lanes to be between Barnumville Road and Prospect Street.

Heilemann then asked Hurley if the Village was part of Manchester Center. Hurley answered that the Village was part of the Town. Heilemann indicated that he had been confused because Manchester Center's Town Manager had asserted during the meeting that the two were separate municipalities. Kolloff commented that she thought the discussion made sense, given that the Town made up the bulk of the stretch where the cycling lanes would be placed. Hurley commented that it was probably an equal split between Village and Town. Kolloff questioned whether the Village might lose opportunities for input if the Town was the lead applicant on the grant application. Hurley stressed that the Town and the Village needed to work together on such a project, and Heilemann indicated that while he thought the point salient, he believed the Village and Town were equal partners on the project.

*Continued Discussion on Formation of Energy Committee and Homeowner Letter*

Heilemann then introduced the final item on the agenda before opening the floor to Kolloff to update the Commission on progress. Kolloff stated that she had an outline of responsibilities for an Energy Subcommittee and a final draft of a letter for homeowners regarding preferential solar siting. Key changes made in the final draft included the removal of the map, minor formatting changes, and several clarifications made based on the discussion in the previous Commission meeting. Kolloff also indicated that VanDerWielen had assisted her in developing the list of sites. VanDerWielen commented that in the case of vacant lots, it might be clearer to use Parcel IDs instead of addresses beginning with '0'.

MacLaurin then asked about a ground-mounted solar installation being installed on Main Street, asking what options for communication or enforcement were open to the Commission or VanDerWielen. A conversation ensued during which the jurisdictional boundaries between the Public Utility Commission (PUC) and the municipality lay, how and should the Commission communicate with the property owner or solar contractor(s), and the role of the Energy Committee in participating in PUC hearings were discussed. MacLaurin indicated that he would speak with the property owner concerning compliance. VanDerWielen stated that he believed it could be misconstrued as enforcement, which the municipality was barred from in the case of PUC permitting. MacLaurin indicated that he wanted to introduce the Plan of Development to local residents and contractors, to encourage compliance with its provisions. Heilemann asked about next steps. Kolloff indicated that she would send the documents she presented to everyone, and that VanDerWielen and her would conduct more regular research on PUC permitting each Monday moving forward.

There being no further business before the Commission, Scarnecchia motioned to adjourn. Kolloff seconded the motion. The Commission then adjourned at 12:34pm.

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

Respectfully Submitted,  
Curan VanDerWielen, Zoning Administrative Officer