



March 27th, 2024

Members Present: Richard Heilemann (Chair), Anthony MacLaurin, Nick Parks

Members Absent: Christie Bronstein, Tom Scarnecchia, Eric Dorsch

Others Present: Curan VanDerWielen (Zoning Administrator), Janet Hurley, Melody French, Keld Alstrup, Andrew McKeever, Brian Maggiotto, Audrey Koloff, Arthur Short, Lisa Wright, Dan Skogal, Pam Nemlich, and three other members of the public.

Call to Order: 1:01 PM by Heilemann.

Changes to Agenda: None.

Motion: To approve the minutes for the Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission of February 21st, 2024.

Motion made by MacLaurin. Motion seconded by Parks.

Motion unanimously approved.

Kickoff Presentation from BCRC for the Bylaw Modernization Project

Heilemann began by introducing Hurley and the purpose of the kickoff presentation, before giving Hurley the floor to present. Hurley began by introducing the two Bylaw Modernization Grant (BMG) projects the Village has pursued since 2022, describing initial efforts adopted in 2023 as the first of two phases. The second phase would consist of work to be completed over the course of the calendar year, designed to address housing and climate challenges, protect the historic character of the Village, and to streamline its permitting process. Hurley then walked the Commission through the intended goals and timeline of the project, which was projected to be finalized by January 31st, 2025.

Hurley continued, describing a 2021 study conducted to analyze bylaw conformance amount existing structures within the Village Center. Hurley noted that the analysis found that 78% of all parcels studied had at least two bylaw nonconformities, with 97% of those parcels experiencing at least one. Hurley described several other nonconformities relevant to the studied parcels before noting that the contradiction between what exists and what the Village intends to encourage in terms of land use would need to be reconciled as part of the work conducted under the BMG.

Hurley then described several public engagement tools that BCRC and the Village would utilize as part of this project, including a public visioning workshop in May and a series of neighborhood walks to address location-specific items. Hurley also noted that several items would need to be addressed regarding compliance with VT Act 47 of 2023 (HOME Act), but that she was awaiting further information on municipal water and sewer access in the Village before beginning that section of work.

After the neighborhood walks had been completed, Hurley noted that a draft unified ordinance would be prepared to combine the Village's flood hazard, subdivision, zoning, and sign regulations, which would be modeled in part on the public input received over the previous months of engagement. The final stages of the process would be to hold a public meeting to review and vote on the draft unified ordinance before passing it to the Board of Trustees for a final determination. Hurley also noted that other BCRC staff would provide support on the project, including Samantha Page, Callie Fishburn, and Dara Zink.

The floor was then opened to questions for Hurley about the presentation. MacLaurin asked whether the nonconformance noted by Hurley as part of the 2021 study came as a surprise or not. Hurley responded that for municipalities like Manchester Village, this phenomenon was not surprising. Hurley also noted that much of 20th century municipal planning emphasized the use of cars, which stymied traditional development patterns. As such, communities with downtowns dominated by 19th century development often had adopted zoning regulations which conflicted with land use as it existed.

MacLaurin then asked to what extend golf courses would be impacted by alterations to the zoning bylaws. Hurley responded that she didn't believe they would be impacted by the work under the BMG. A short conversation ensued about the development rights and protections afforded to different golf courses located within the Village.

Parks then asked Hurley to summarize the takeaway impacts local stakeholders should expect coming out of this project. Hurley responded that the project was intended to ensure that the zoning regulations reflected what existed in form and that all elements of the regulations conformed with recent changes to statutory law. Hurley added that the involvement of the public through the process would be paramount so as to better define the vision of what the Village wanted to see coming out of its land use regulations.



MacLaurin then asked how Hurley would recommend overcoming any lethargic engagement from the public. Hurley responded that utilizing outreach tools, such as media sources, online postings, cold calls, and direct outreach were all proven strategies in motivating engagement. MacLaurin commented that he believed the midday scheduling of meetings might restrict attendance among working individuals, and recommended that scheduling for meetings designed around public engagement might be held at later times or on weekends. Hurley added that adding a variety of locations across meetings as well as offering simple incentives such as food or coffee could help attendance. Hurley also stated that improving accessibility to events such as the neighborhood walks could improve attendance, recommending that the Village provide some sort of car or bus service for individuals for whom walking was difficult.

Maggiotto stated that he was excited to see the Village move to improve its zoning bylaws, and he believed that the concerns of business owners in the Village should be heard when discussing changes for the B-1 and B-2 districts. Specifically, Maggiotto was concerned about adding new layers of oversight to a system which included multiple hurdles of municipal and state permitting review. Hurley noted that she believed the input of businesses was certainly a necessity for the process, and offered to connect with Maggiotto after the meeting. Hurley also noted that several changes had recently been proposed by the Vermont Legislature to the Act 250 and municipal zoning processes. A brief conversation ensued regarding the status and impact of zoning on local businesses. Parks asked Hurley to describe what proposed changes had been proposed at the state level, and a brief conversation ensued regarding possible legislation, changes to Vermont statutory law within the next year, and recent changes made to the Village zoning bylaws regarding the HOME Act.

Heilemann asked whether the visioning workshop would consist of a few hours or if it might last longer. Hurley responded that she expected it to last a few hours. Alstrup commented that with many second homeowners living in the Village, there may be some voices missing in the conversation. Hurley asked when these second homeowners tend to stay in the Village, to which Alstrup and MacLaurin both responded: generally, in May. Hurley noted that it might be better to push the visioning workshop back to June, then. MacLaurin commented that he believed that the location for the visioning workshop should be held elsewhere and perhaps sandwiches could be provided. French asked how long the meeting would take, to which Hurley responded a couple of hours, although it may depend on turnout.

Heilemann asked how close together the neighborhood walks might be scheduled, to which Hurley stated she believed twice a week should suffice. Heilemann commented that other organizations were performing informational walkthroughs during the Summer, such as the Manchester Historical Society, and offered to reach out about possible coordination. Hurley also suggested creating a separate page on the Village website to provide easier access to information about the walkthroughs. VanDerWielen stated that he would consult with the Trustees about the matter. Hurley asked whether the Village utilized social media. VanDerWielen responded that at present, the Village did not. MacLaurin commented that he might ask the Manchester Business Association to help get the word out. Heilemann added that the Village would use its email list to send out emails *en masse* to participating residents. Hurley then noted that the next steps would be to coordinate between BCRC and the Planning Commission on scheduling, and that Samantha Page of BCRC would be reaching out soon.

Maggiotto commented that on scheduling, a weekend or late midweek meeting might restrict the ability of business owners to attend, and recommended hosting a separate meeting early on a weekday to discuss business owners' concerns. MacLaurin commented that the Manchester Business Association tended to meet in the early morning. VanDerWielen noted that it would be possible to host a public meeting regarding commercial development and the BMG broadly. Hurley noted that it was unlikely BCRC staff would attend such a meeting, but noted that she believed it to be a good idea. Wright offered to host such a meeting at the Ekwanok Country Club, followed by Nemlich at the Orvis Company. With no further questions, Hurley thanked the Commission and ended her presentation.

New Business

No new business was brought before the Planning Commission.

Other Business

Update on Transportation Consulting Work Being Performed by BCRC

Heilemann introduced the topic, noting that for some time Mark Anders at the BCRC had been working both with the Village and Manchester Center on studying and designing improvements for pedestrian and bicycle traffic safety along Main Street. Heilemann noted that a Request for Proposals had been issued to conduct a scoping study, and that him, Nick Parks, Wilbur Rice of the Town Planning Commission, and Gordon Black, the Town's Assessor, were all coordinating on the project. Heilemann noted



that he would keep the Commission apprised as developments continued. MacLaurin commented that he hoped improved safety would encourage more students to bike to school. Heilemann noted that in a recent walk through Arlington Virginia, he had been impressed with the significant amount of bicycle infrastructure in place, and hoped to have improved accessibility for cyclists in Manchester Village soon.

Discussion of Possible Appointment of Keld Alstrup to the Commission

Heilemann noted that he had recently approached Keld Alstrup about filling a vacancy on the Commission, and Alstrup had shown interest. Heilemann introduced Alstrup and asked for any questions. None being raised, the item was put to a motion.

Motion: To nominate Keld Alstrup as a Planning Commissioner, for the Trustees to review at their next meeting.

Motion made by MacLaurin. Motion seconded by Parks.

Motion unanimously approved.

Motion: To adjourn.

Motion made by Parks. Motion seconded by MacLaurin.

Motion unanimously approved at 1:58pm.

The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission will be held at 11:00am on April 17th, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Curan VanDerWielen,
Zoning Administrative Officer