



April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Members Present: Richard Heilemann (Chair), Anthony MacLaurin, Nick Parks, Eric Dorsch [via Zoom], Keld Alstrup

Members Absent: Christie Bronstein, Tom Scarnecchia

Others Present: Curan VanDerWielen (Zoning Administrator)

**Call to Order:** 11:01 AM by Heilemann.

**Changes to Agenda:** Two items added:

5. Discussion on the Use of MERP Funds and Next Steps
6. Update From the Zoning Administrator on Short-Term Rental Registration

### **Approval of the Meeting Minutes**

VanDerWielen noted that a change to the minutes had been suggested by Janet Hurley at Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC). As drafted, the minutes were written so that Hurley had stated that BCRC would not seek to attend a possible Planning Commission meeting held to specifically discuss commercial development and zoning. Hurley suggested to VanDerWielen via email that she had actually stated that such a meeting could not be conducted under the Bylaw Modernization Grant (BMG) budget, but that BCRC would actually seek to attend. MacLaurin, Parks, and Alstrup all stated that they believed Hurley's suggested correction to be accurate. A brief conversation about the BMG and what a special meeting about commercial development might consist of, ensued.

Alstrup made two further suggestions, noting one spelling error of "Vermont" and noting that a line about second homeowners arriving in May would more accurately be phrased as "beginning, in May" rather than as drafted, "generally, in May". VanDerWielen stated that he had noted all corrections as suggested by the Commission.

**Motion: To approve the minutes with noted corrections for the Special Meeting of the Planning Commission of March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024.**

Motion made by MacLaurin. Motion seconded by Alstrup.

Motion unanimously approved.

### **Discussion on Bylaw Modernization Grant Next Steps**

Heilemann introduced the topic of discussion, noting that a date had not yet been decided on between the Commission and BCRC regarding the Visioning Workshop in June. Heilemann also noted he had additional questions he wished to follow up with BCRC on, regarding the format of the meeting. VanDerWielen stated that he had spoken with BCRC about preferred dates for June, and had received June 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> as the best time frame communicated from BCRC staff. VanDerWielen also noted that the Commission had agreed on a later meeting time (either 5:00pm or 6:00pm) to increase potential attendance among local stakeholders. After some discussion, the Commission could not come to an agreement on scheduling, largely due to scheduling conflicts among its membership. VanDerWielen stated that he would follow up with Commissioners using a Doodle poll to better set up timing, and then work with BCRC to button up scheduling for June. VanDerWielen also mentioned that he had discussed booking Burr and Burton's (BBA) facilities for the event. A brief discussion ensued regarding the suitability of the BBA facilities versus others offered, including from Orvis and the Ekwanok Country Club.

MacLaurin asked about the format and status of outreach regarding the BMG. MacLaurin then noted that he believed a mix of letters to residents and direct outreach among Commissioners would be the most effective mode of outreach. Heilemann noted that the proximity of the Annual Meeting might affect attendance with the BMG Visioning Workshop. VanDerWielen stated that a press release and additional outreach consisting of emails and cold calls could also be prepared in the month preceding the Visioning Workshop. Heilemann stated that he wanted Commissioners to focus on direct outreach with local stakeholders, noting that he would develop a list of stakeholders for the May meeting. Heilemann also expressed concern that if outreach began too early, then it might be less effective. Heilemann expressed his belief that outreach should begin following the May meeting, to avoid any such issues.

Heilemann and MacLaurin both noted that they would prefer to see use of the email list and the sending of a postcard to all residents as part of the outreach efforts. MacLaurin noted that the text for such outreach needed to be clear so that residents



understood explicitly the purpose of the meeting. Parks suggested using social media platforms, such as Facebook, and the issuance of a press release as additional tools. VanDerWielen noted that without a policy, the Village had avoided social media use, but that he planned to issue a press release about two weeks ahead of the meeting. Alstrup suggested the development of a page to handout to stakeholders as part of the Commissioners' direct outreach. VanDerWielen offered to prepare such a handout. Parks then asked if cold calling could be used, to which VanDerWielen responded that the Village had no comprehensive call list, but that he could pull a handful of numbers from Zoning Permits if necessary.

VanDerWielen recapped the discussion, noting that the Commissioners would handle direct outreach with local stakeholders while the office would prepare a press release, a handout for said outreach, email drafts, and the design of a postcard. MacLaurin asked if Janet Hurley at BCRC would be preparing any materials. Heileman commented that he would reach out to Samantha Page at BCRC to ask what the Commission needed to facilitate for the meeting.

MacLaurin then asked whether other ongoing items would impact the BMG work, citing the Village National Historic District update as an example. VanDerWielen explained that given the timeline and lack of interaction with the Bylaws, that it was highly unlikely to impact any BMG work. Alstrup asked which buildings and/or zones would be affected by the National Historic update. VanDerWielen explained the nature of the update, noting that some registered buildings would likely be taken of the National Register while others that weren't considered historically relevant in 1984 would be added. VanDerWielen then explained that such designations would affect how property owners interacted with the Village Zoning Bylaws, state regulations, and grant/tax credit opportunities, but would not directly impact the language of the Bylaws themselves.

Parks asked about the dates for the neighborhood walkthroughs. Heilemann noted that he would check in with Page about timing. VanDerWielen noted that they were originally described as falling between July and September. Parks stated that any outreach should mention the walkthroughs and include dates, if possible. Alstrup asked about how many walkthroughs and which locations would be selected. VanDerWielen noted that these would likely need to be addressed with Page as well.

#### **Update on the Bike-Ped Grant with Manchester Center**

Heilemann noted that he had no significant updates on this matter, at this time. A May 1<sup>st</sup> deadline had been set to receive scoping bids, but otherwise, Heilemann stated that he would provide a more substantive update at the May meeting.

#### **New Business**

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#### **Discussion on the Use of MERP Funds and Next Steps**

VanDerWielen noted that the use of MERP funds had been addressed in the last Board of Trustees meeting, to which VanDerWielen had performed follow up with Callie Fishburn at BCRC regarding its use. VanDerWielen reported that his understanding of the conversation with Fishburn was that the MERP funds were designed to be used for outreach on efforts performed through the Energy Committee. Heilemann noted that he believed an audit was included as part of the funding. MacLaurin noted that Audrey Kolloff had formerly been spearheading the implementation of the MERP funds. VanDerWielen asked what such a use would consist of. A short discussion ensued regarding the proper use of MERP funds and what, if any, work needed to be performed jointly with Manchester Center's Energy Committee. VanDerWielen stated that he would perform additional follow up to develop a better plan of action.

MacLaurin asked whether any new Public Utility Commission (PUC) permits had been issued at Village addresses during the last period. VanDerWielen noted that none had, but that he intended to continue to keep the Commission informed as new permits came up, on a monthly basis. Alstrup suggested that it might be appropriate for the Village to mount solar panels on municipal buildings, such as the highway maintenance garage.

#### **Update From the Zoning Administrator on Short-Term Rental Registration**

Heilemann introduced the topic of discussion and opened the floor to VanDerWielen to provide an update on Short-Term Rental (STR) registration. VanDerWielen noted that significant outreach had been performed by the office regarding STR registration, and inquiries were frequent from local STR operators. VanDerWielen also noted that the Division of Fire Safety had been coordinating with him on the status of local fire inspections as required as part of the registration process. VanDerWielen concluded that the large number of inquiries was encouraging and signaled a wide familiarity with at least the existence of the new law among the public. VanDerWielen noted that he believed most registration forms would be received very close to the deadline, citing the paying of taxes and the local filing of annual events permits as examples of how other stakeholders tended to wait until the last minute to meet mandated deadlines. Heilemann and MacLaurin asked VanDerWielen to keep the Commission apprised of how registration progressed over time.



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**Other Business**

*No other business was brought before the Commission.*

**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.

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**Motion: To adjourn.**

Motion made by MacLaurin. Motion seconded by Alstrup.

Motion unanimously approved at 11:54am.

The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission will be held at 11:00am on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Curan VanDerWielen,  
Zoning Administrative Officer

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