

Monday June 10th, 2024

Westminster Planning Commission Monthly Meeting

Present: Michelle, Matthew, Cassaundra, Lachlan and Pavel

Meeting called to order at 6:36pm

1. Lachlan proposed the following topics as adjustments to the agenda:
 - a. Discussion of upcoming changes to the open meeting law. Changes are going into effect on 7/1/24
 - b. Sharing of resources regionally
 - i. Cassaundra gave us an informal update on discussions at Windham Regional Commission (WRC)
 - ii. State is expected to conduct a state or county wide septic survey (facilitated by WRC)
 - c. Use of planning professionals in support of planning development.
 - d. Zoning by-laws changes (?)
2. Meeting moved to New Business part of the agenda (notes are in order of the published agenda, whereas the meeting at times meandered between topics).
 - a. Review of Westminster Census data
 - i. Data is available in open source format on this website run by the US Census Bureau:
https://data.census.gov/profile/Westminster_town,_Windham_County,_Vermont?g=060XX00US5002581400
 - ii. Main question is how we incorporate this data into the town plan. Do we need to wait for a third party such as VLTC (Vermont League of Towns and Cities) to provide the updated format that complies with potential Vermont statutory requirements. Alternatively we can reformat existing tables to show the 2020 information.
 - iii. ACTION: Board agreed that Lachlan will reach out to Lou for advice.
 - b. Discussion on Town Plan status.
 - i. Do we adopt the current town plan (version 6.2, October 13th, 2015) with minimal updates to reflect the 2020 Census data OR do we jump into development of the New Town plan.
 1. ACTION: Board agrees that as a stop gap measure we will pursue update of the current plan with minimal revisions.
 - ii. Discussion continued on New Town Plat
 1. Previous Planning Commission was in the process of Town Plan re-write in 2023 with the help of the Windham Regional Commission. Town manager has given us access to a Google Drive folder that contains some of the documents from this process.

2. Michelle may also have access to working documents from this effort that were individual efforts of the commission members.
ACTION: she will attempt to compile this information in the next two weeks.
- c. Open Meeting Law
- i. The law clarifies requirements for town governments to integrate teleconferencing features into open meetings. Lachlan had a discussion with Lou about the changes to the law. Takeaways are:
 1. Town administration is still studying what effect the law has in practice.
 2. In summary it seems that if not teleconferencing is available meetings may have to be recorded.
 3. If necessary to meet teleconferencing requirements town will arrange a town specific account on whatever teleconferencing platform in order to avoid ad-hoc solutions by individual members, something akin to a municipally owned zoom account.
 4. If meeting must be recorded board may have to move meetings back to the town hall building.
- d. Regional Support and Cooperation
- i. Based on networking with planning commission members in a half dozen other Windham county towns, we've discovered that Westminster is an outlier in terms of professional support available to the planning commission to answer compliance or access professional expertise on planning issues. (Question to Lachlan - what do these other towns have)
 - ii. To secure this expertise we have access to grants at all levels of government. ACCD at the Vermont state level has municipal planning grant program. WRC may have funds available at regional level. There are multiple programs that could be tapped into on the federal levels, such as special programs for border regions (we are close enough to Canada), Connecticut River corridor activities facilitated by the Federal Gov't and so forth.
 - iii. Board agrees that expertise and funds necessary to secure it are necessary. MOTION is proposed by Pavel Pepeliaev and seconded by the Matthew:
 1. Board motions to pursue the necessary funds to secure professional support to develop the town plan.
 - a. Unanimous approval.
 - b. Clarification on the meaning of necessary funds. We mean both the grants if they are available or allocations from town Y'25 budget if grants are not available.
 - iv. Discussion swings back to town plan contents. ACTION: Ask town zoning administrator for breakdown permit application in order to update the HOUSING section of the town plan. See page 43. Not sure who the action is assign to.

- e. Zoning by-laws
 - i. Board discussed housing goals outlined in the previous plans. Broad discussion of septic and drilled well constraints followed. Can lots be subdivided with shared septic/drilled systems?
 - ii. BFUHS Board has explored developing teacher/staff housing on its campus. This conceptually overlaps with bullet point 2.e.i.
 - iii. Discussed access to water/waste utilities.
- 3. Motion to adjourn
 - a. Unanimous approval
 - b. Meeting adjourned at 8:14pm