

Town of New Haven Planning Commission Meeting
Draft Minutes
Monday, September 24, 2020
New Haven, VT Town Office

This meeting was held remotely via GoToMeeting.

Planning Commission Members Present: Co-Chair Rob Litch, Kathy Cahill, Bev Landon, Maggie Eaton

Staff: Zoning Administrator Aaron Brown

Visitors: Kathy Barrett, Amanda Boddell, Steve Dupoise, Tammy Newmark, and John Mazzuchi

I. Call to Order

7:07 PM

1. Adjustments to Agenda

Maggie Eaton requested that the group put a practice in place to meet quorum requirements. The group agreed to use Doodle to poll members for future meetings. Bev Landon also reminded the group that it has an open commissioner position and could get alternates. Steve Dupoise encouraged the group to fill its empty seat and consider the possibility of holding two meetings per month.

2. Visitors' Business

Visitors Amanda Boddell, Tammy Newmark, and John Mazzuchi announced that they were in attendance to listen to the meeting. Dupoise encouraged the Commission to move forward with changes to the zoning regulations. He said he is pleased with the progress Maggie Eaton has made with the Energy Plan. He would like to see that Plan and new zoning regulations ready for a vote at Town Meeting 2021. Rob Litch pointed out that he's pleased with Eaton's work and the group's attempt to address a variety of zoning topics. One difficulty with remote meetings is reviewing zoning map revisions. Dupoise suggested doing some projects with subcommittees. Cahill said she is comfortable holding a subcommittee in-person meeting. Brown offered the Town Hall space to accommodate distance guidelines. Bev Landon said she is willing to meet in-person at Town Hall. Eaton agreed.

Litch asked if the map is digitized, and Brown responded yes. Cahill, however, said that the version online appears pixelated when one zooms in. Brown said that feedback is useful and should be directed to the RPC with details. John Mazzuchi said he has seen a map of New Haven from Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) that can be zoomed in for detail.

II. Standing Items

1. ZA Update

Brown reported that the Development Review Board (DRB) had two agenda items at its last meeting: (1) a home business occupation permit for Joseph Boddington, d/b/a Champion Auto Glass, which was continued to gather further information; (2) closing of the hearing for the Sherman Lane Neighbors' appeal of a permit to convert a three-bedroom primary dwelling unit to a one-bedroom accessory unit. No new evidence or information was taken for the appeal case. The DRB needed to go through the formality of closing the hearing prior to signing its decision. The DRB has potentially three subdivision

sketch plans for early October. Building permits increased slightly toward the end of the building season with shed permits. Litch asked if there are any new housing starts. Brown responded no but added that housing is turning over very quickly when put on the market.

2. Town Plan Update

i. Energy Plan

- a. Eaton reported that ACRPC executive director Adam Lougee has reviewed the energy plan draft. He identified only a few changes, mainly energy data that needed to be updated. Eaton said she had questions about vehicle registration data for New Haven. She learned that the current data is an estimate based on population. Brown suggested that the DMV might be able to provide more reliable information. Litch asked if the newly passed Global Warming Solutions Act would require changes to this energy plan. She responded that the Act will more likely change operations at the state level than at the municipal level.

Eaton said she also attended a webinar about on-farm energy. She said the loss of farms speaks to the need to diversify farm operations. That's one reason adaptive re-use of farm buildings has been a major discussion. She said revisions to the Energy Plan do include consideration of on-farm energy projects.

Eaton concluded her remarks on the final draft energy plan, dated September 13, 2020, and motioned the Planning Commission consider it for review and deliberation. Cahill seconded. Motion passed 4-0. A public meeting will follow. A discussion of logistics followed. The town office can provide hard copies of the energy plan and perhaps set up space in the Town Hall for people to view maps. Brown suggested a mailing to town residents could be a way to reach people who do not use Front Porch Forum. The PC has not used much of its budget this year due to Covid. Eaton and Litch agreed that is a good idea. Litch said the next regular meeting should devote at least 30 minutes to the energy plan to ensure that it is ready for a public discussion. Litch thanked Eaton for her work on the draft.

3. ACRPC Activities

- i. Transportation Grants: the RPC is working with the town and two local volunteers, Larry Buck and Doug McCain, to submit a grant to do an engineering/scoping study to improve bicycling on Munger Street. This is New Haven's major portion of the recently completed Triangle Bike Loop study.

4. Zoning Revisions

- i. Definitions: two-family dwelling vs. attached accessory dwelling (has size implications as accessory are limited to 30% of the main); habitable living space (not defined)
 - ii. Exempt Accessory Structure Size
 - iii. Sketch Plan Review Language
 - iv. Adaptive Re-Use Language

The group discussed definitions for accessory and two-family dwellings. Accessory dwellings are currently limited to 30% of the habitable space of primary structures, which Litch reminded the group, is not defined. Brown said Addison County towns are consistent in limiting size, but are not consistent in defining ownership and whether the difference between accessory and a two-family dwelling is that one party owns both units or two-family dwellings are owned by two separate families.

Brown explained that the size limitation has come up in three potential applicants recently who wish to exceed the 30% allowance. Two of the houses varied greatly in size – roughly 1,200 square feet to 4,000+ square feet – but each wished to build larger than allowed. Litch said that when the regulations were originally written, the PC was primarily thinking about small “mother-in-law” apartments. Litch said a square footage limit seems like the simplest way to go about defining accessory units. Landon added that some accessibility features require a lot of space. She recommended that “livable space” be added to the definition of the structure to determine square footage. Brown reviewed a comparison of habitable space definitions in nearby towns. Cahill asked what happens if a house with a pre-existing accessory apartment wishes to add another unit. Brown said acreage becomes a major issue because districts require a minimum number of acreage per unit.

Tammy Newmark asked for clarification that this discussion is about future development. Brown said yes and that developments have to meet the standards in place at the time. Newmark said it seems opportune that the Sherman Lane Neighbors appeal, which was closed the previous evening, is preceding a discussion about size limitations the night after. Brown responded that he brought the issue to the PC because it has arisen with at least three potential applicants this summer.

III. Review of Minutes

1. August 10, 2020

Maggie Eaton moved to accept the minutes. Kathy Cahill second. Minutes approved.

IV. Correspondence/Mail

None

V. Adjourned at 8:53

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Brown