

**Town of Bristol**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**HYBRID Public Meeting**  
**Tuesday, September 17, 2024**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**DRAFT**

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**Members Present:** Fred Baser, Kevin Hanson, Melissa Hernandez, Chanin Hill, Rob Rooker, Bill Sayre  
**Staff Present:** AZ Larsen, Zoning and Planning Administrator  
**Others Present:** None

**Call to Order:** Kevin Hanson called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

**I. Review agenda for additions, removal, or adjustment of any items per 1 V.S.A. 18 §312(d)(3)(A) and implicit approval**

Discussion of the Selectboard hearing on proposed zoning changes was moved in order to be covered under the Old Business portion of the meeting.

**II. Public Comment**

Ron Dendas introduced himself as the new Bristol representative on the RPC, noting that he had attended several meetings and was interested in learning if there were any topics the PC would like addressed by the RPC or matters that he should pay particular attention to at those meetings. He indicated that he is on the Housing and Economic Development Committee, and his background is in health improvement and related connectivity to community. Kevin thanked Ron for volunteering, and will include him on the list of recipients of PC information. He explained that the PC has been working on Village planning zones and zoning changes, which relate to community, noting that the proposed draft bylaws are currently under Selectboard review.

**III. Old Business**

Action: Develop recommendations for the Planning and Zoning Administrator position for the Selectboard

Fred supplied some suggestions related to reporting which might be provided by the PZA, as there is currently no official outline of such reports. Other members agreed with Fred that there is no need to create unnecessary paperwork, but that providing the PC with some sense of zoning activity would be helpful going forward.

AZ then distributed a report they had created by pulling information from the NEMRC system, which was reviewed by the PC members. It was agreed that the information included was useful and contained appropriate data, and that one piece that should be added is the Zoning District for which the permit was issued. The report included building permits only, and it was indicated that for future reporting, DRB hearings should also be included. There was also concurrence that monthly reports would be suitable, as any longer period of time would include too much information to be digested easily.

Fred inquired of AZ how they are finding the PZA position, and they responded positively, noting that there is much to learn and that they are interested in pursuing more of the Planning aspects of the position going forward.

**Discussion: Selectboard Hearing on proposed zoning changes**

Kevin outlined that the Selectboard is holding a public hearing on the proposed UDRs on October 14, allowing just enough time for warning the vote for the November 4 Election Day. He explained that in their recent review of the draft, the Board decided not to accept the PC proposal that both primary and accessory structures in the HDR and VR districts be subject to the same setback distances. Instead, the Board intends to maintain the original proposal of a smaller setback for accessory structures; Kevin provided some of the rationale of the Selectboard related to this decision, mostly related to the potential creation of numerous non-compliant structures.

Rob noted that there are consequences for permitting to be faced from either position, but he and others acknowledged that the Selectboard does have the final say in the draft to be considered for adoption.

**IV. New Business**

**Discussion: Review PC vision for continued housing opportunities, Act 250 exemptions**

Kevin spoke of the PC's discussing what issues should be focused on following the work completed on the UDR revisions, and indicated that many aspects of housing had been brought to the forefront in those conversations. He reminded the group that he has had conversations with Jessica Teets, a Middlebury College Political Science professor, regarding students taking part in research related to housing issues, including the potential for students involved in independent study to assist the PC in gathering related information. Kevin advised that the PC begin thinking about what a vision might be for continued housing discussions, and what quantitative and qualitative information would be helpful in guiding those discussions. Rob agreed that any information that can help the PC in making informed decisions will be useful, and Kevin advised the group that working to clarify ideas and reach some level of consensus will be useful before engaging with any professional help and working on related regulatory changes. He mentioned, and AZ confirmed, their interest in spending some of their scheduled time on more planning-related work such as this.

In response to a question from Fred, Kevin explained that the recent work completed under grant funding was somewhat limited by the grant parameters, but that the Town can now be looked at more holistically in terms of where further density is appropriate. He also mentioned that recent changes to Act 250 requirements are allowing for exemptions in more developed areas, and a map of that impact on the center of Bristol was presented.

Kevin noted that Jessica has a conflict with the regularly scheduled PC meetings, and that he will potentially set up a meeting for an alternate date so that Jessica can attend and explain her program to the group.

**Discussion: Communications tower at the Fire House**

It was noted that there has been some discussion at the Selectboard level regarding appropriate locations for telecommunication towers, including at the Fire House. Kevin noted he brought this up just for awareness purposes; AZ indicated that there is currently difficulty in permitting such towers under the existing regulations.

## **V. Administrative Matters**

### **Acceptance of Minutes**

The minutes of June 18 and July 16, 2024 were approved, after amending the June minutes to reflect that Melissa was not present.

### **Discussion: Update from Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Steering Committee**

Chanin had nothing specific to report on the Plan's progress, but noted that the draft will be available for public comment this month. She indicated that not many changes, and no major changes, had been made to the Plan during this review.

### **Discussion: Updated Capital Improvement Plan**

Valerie had presented the Plan at the July PC meeting; not much commentary had been provided at that point, but Kevin indicated that the Plan's content will be relevant when next updating the Town Plan.

### **Miscellaneous Correspondence**

Kevin had attached correspondence received to the meeting materials, there were no comments/questions from PC members.

## **VI. Public Comment**

Ron provided an explanation/clarification of Act 250 map which had been demonstrated earlier in the meeting.

## **VII. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary