

Town of Bristol
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
HYBRID Public Meeting
Tuesday, October 15, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Kevin Hanson, Melissa Hernandez, John Moyers, Rob Rooker, Bill Sayre
Staff Present: AZ Larsen, Zoning and Planning Administrator
Others Present: Jessica Teets

Call to Order: Kevin Hanson called the meeting to order at 6:54 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

No changes were made to the agenda.

II. Public Comment

Nobody requested time to address the PC.

III. Old Business

Discussion: Review PC vision for continued housing opportunities with Jessica Teets.

Kevin explained that Jessica's students have worked on housing studies for Addison County, and that the PC discussion is an opportunity to provide information regarding what her students might be able to assist with to support upcoming considerations regarding housing in Bristol. Kevin provided a timeline of upcoming PC work, including work on housing, UDR review and revision/approval process, and updating the Town Plan (due in 2028). The timeline he presented runs through 2028 and devotes a large portion of time to housing work.

Discussion: Review with Jessica Teets, Middlebury College Policial Science professor on interaction with her class.

Jessica explained that she and her students are able to help with research, and noted that she was interested in hearing some PC input on the housing strategies outlined by Kevin in the meeting materials.

Kevin asked for feedback from PC members regarding some of the topics he had included:

- Review of one-acre zoning for potentially allowing for more density
 - Much of the one-acre zoning is in areas not able to access town infrastructure
 - Places near town are best for affordable housing, as transportation is not as necessary
 - People in one-acre areas are not expecting increased density, so caution and communication are key
 - Hamlets are something to be looked into
 - Areas for communities of small homes (600 – 1000 sq feet) is another option to explore
- Conduct a housing study, understand school enrollment
 - Determine what is available and more importantly determine what people are seeking
 - The public should be part of the conversation
 - A broad representation should be assured in the survey results
 - Jessica provided some information for the PC

- Students will be using quantitative measures, but will also include focus groups and gathering of some qualitative information
- Housing ‘bottlenecks’ exist; i.e., older folks don’t have places to downsize into, so homes aren’t opening up for people looking for either starter or ‘next step’ housing
- Much can be attributed to wastewater needs

Jessica then provided more detail regarding how her students can help.

- Look at best practices in Vermont, research various municipal policies related to housing
- Community consultation and education
 - Many people understand the need for more density, students can assist with addressing related concerns likely to be expressed.
- Expansion of wastewater – likely more a professional rather than student-led task
 - John noted that a plan for this was developed a few years ago, and the accompanying report should be consulted
- Support by PC members for looking at best practices
 - Also, learning where good areas already exist for development, get a picture of where there is currently more dense development and where current regulations already allow for more development
 - Infrastructure an important part of these considerations
 - Implications of the river proximity for various developmental impacts
 - Quality of life impacts – noise, lighting – to be considered and pre-emptively regulated
 - Infill where possible with no new septic capacity might be best first look
 - Jessica indicated that students can look into strategies for allowing for infill in ways that do not offend neighbors
 - Community input important

Kevin outlined the possibility of a tandem approach to these efforts, with the PC spending some time interacting with area towns that have more in-depth planning departments while the students conduct their research. He noted that he has this broader issue on the PC timeline for a year, so that a thorough process can be followed. Jessica explained some of the work underway in the region, and indicated that the PC might have to look outside of Addison County to find suitable examples of effective strategies.

There was some discussion of the many factors at play in housing development, and any information that can be gleaned being helpful. Renovations of existing building was noted to be part of the solution, but difficult to undertake without some type of regulatory allowances or subsidies. Group homes for elders, boarding houses, small/tiny homes, and people desiring their own independent spaces were all brought up as issues to be part of the conversation.

The timeline and logistics of the work to be completed were outlined. Jessica explained that the students working on the project would begin aggregating information in the winter (Jan-Feb 25) term, and then in the spring begin to provide mini case studies of how towns are incentivizing various ways to accommodate increased housing. These best practice ideas would be presented to the PC in March or

April. The students would present these to the PC, and it would be decided which avenues to investigate in more depth, indicating a May time frame for reaching out to the organizations/commissions behind those concepts. It was tentatively planned to have an introductory meeting with students in the Jan/Feb timeframe, and will be determined as things progress if any check-in meetings are necessary.

Jessica suggested that in the meantime, the PC reach out to other towns and learn what they are discussing regarding housing, and noted a couple of individuals working with Addison Housing Works and the RPC that might provide some insight or assistance. Some other initiatives were mentioned, which will be followed up on.

Several other bullet points regarding upcoming PC work had been included in the outline provided by Kevin, but were not addressed, and will be covered at an upcoming meeting.

IV. New Business

None

V. Administrative Matters

Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of September 17, 2024 were approved.

Discussion: Update from Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Steering Committee

As Chanin was not present, no update was provided.

Discussion: Update from Planning and Zoning Administrator

AZ provided a written report, containing administrative, permitting, and planning information, and requested feedback regarding the format and content. PC members expressed their appreciation for this information being presented in a digestible format.

VI. Public Comment

John explained his frequent absences from meetings over the past months, and thanked the PC members for their patience while he was not able to attend regularly.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary