Town of Bristol
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
HYBRID Public Meeting
Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Meeting Minutes

DRAFT

Planning Commission Members Present: Fred Baser, Kevin Hanson, Melissa Hernandez, Slim Pickens, Chanin Hill, John Moyers, Bill Sayre
Others Present: Kris Perlee, Zoning Administrator
Visitors: Kevin Brown (Town Attorney)

Call to Order: PC Chair Kevin Hanson called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 adjustments were made to the agenda.

II. Public Comment
Nobody offered comments at this time.

III. New Business
Discussion: Overview of Zoning Enabling Statutes
Kevin Brown provided information about Vermont's municipal powers, granted by the Legislature, regarding development of bylaws. He outlined:

- How the Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws relate to each other
- That VSA Title 24, Chapter 117 contains related statutory language
- Specific types of development that must be allowed
- Types of development appropriate for bylaws to address
- Court interpretations
    - The importance of well-defined terms and standards

John Moyers raised some questions regarding property owner rights and rights of neighboring landowners; Kevin clarified how ambiguous issues are addressed. Kevin also explained the meaning of 'spot zoning,' and answered some questions related to site plan review of single-family residences.

Then ADU standards were explained, along with the logistics of permitting ADUs. Confusion related to differentiating between accessory structures and ADUs was discussed. There was also some discussion of the need for and reasons behind the lack of affordable housing, and how much of an issue this is in Bristol.

Discussion: Review Town Plan, parking lot items, and consider next steps
Kevin Hanson raised the topic of what the PC should begin addressing in coming meetings. He had provided the PC members with a list of the implementation items from the Town Plan, broken into five topic areas. He outlined these, and also noted that the 'parking lot' contains three items: the permit notification process; density considerations for RA1, RA2, and RA5; and Short-Term Rentals (STRs).

Several topics were discussed, including:

- The difficulty of incorporating accessibility for businesses along Main Street, where the sidewalk is too narrow to accommodate ramps. Melissa asked what other towns, particularly those with historic storefronts, do to accomplish this.
- Accessibility to the New Haven River and other natural areas was noted as important; Kris explained that GMNF will not allow for new trail development along Baldwin Creek; Fred cautioned that too much river access can be detrimental to water quality.
- Increased housing opportunities created through the recent UDR revisions; Melissa asked about incentivizing the construction of two small houses after older house teardowns, Kris explained that the new regulations provide for this, and that people are looking into alternatives. It was noted that looking at RA District densities can further address this.
- Ensuring increased density isn't detrimental to neighbors, keeping the village areas livable.
- Making Bristol more inviting to commercial and light industrial development, being deliberate regarding where this can take place.
- How to incentivize smaller (less than 1000 sq foot) homes.
- Potential for a housing study/intern.
- Addressing a viable economy, and increase in school enrollment.

Kevin explained that not everything will be addressed immediately, that the Town Plan list is aspirational, and it was agreed that everybody would take a closer look at the lists provided and bring back suggestions of which items to take up for further discussion at the next meeting.

IV. Continuing Business

Discussion: Selectboard Hearing Jan 22nd update

Kevin reported that the Selectboard has adopted the recommendations made by the Planning Commission, and that those changes now require a further public hearing. The Board anticipates scheduling that in an April/May time frame, after which the URD update will be adopted.

Action: Approve DHCD Closeout Form

Kevin provided the draft report that Adam Lougee had created, a final requirement for the Bylaw Modernization Grant that was used for the UDR update work. Keven presented a draft response to the final question on the form, which asks for feedback on the program. The other members present approved of what he had composed, and had no edits to suggest.

V. Administrative Matters

Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of October 17, 2023 and January 16, 2024 were accepted.

Discussion: Zoning Administrator Report

Kris reported that an assistant ZA has been hired, and they will be determining if the ZA role is something they would like to move in.

Discussion: Update from Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Steering Committee

Chanin had nothing to report.

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VI. Public Comment
Nobody offered public comment at this time.

VII. Adjournment
The meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary

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