TOWN OF WILLISTON
Planning Commission
Minutes of December 7, 2021– 7:00 P.M.
Location: Zoom Meeting ID 158-006-871 on zoom.us/join or by calling 1-646-558-8656
Zoom Recording: https://youtu.be/hccz9MtUI1w

Planning Commission Present: Chapin Kaynor (Chair), Meghan Cope (Vice Chair), Cate Lamar, Jill Pardini, Alex Daley; **Absent:** Shayla Livingston, Ron Bomer
Staff: Matt Boulanger, Emily Heymann; **Public:** Geoff Ferrell (FBC Consultant); Taylor Newton (CCRPC)

1) CALL TO ORDER

The meeting came to order at 7:05 PM.

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3) MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 30, 2021 (public access PDF)
Link for PC members to edit: PC Draft Minutes - November 30, 2021

With a motion made by Chapin Kaynor and seconded by Cate Lamar, the minutes were approved as amended. Alex Daley abstained.

The Zoom recorded was started.

4) FY21 ANNUAL REPORT

The commission reviewed the annual report and was generally satisfied. Staff will finesse the following items before transmitting the report to Town Clerk: 1) dates on election and new member appointments, 2) Credit Melinda and other person on the illustrative official map, 3) reason for FBC is beyond Town Plan goal but also in response to negative feedback on current design in Growth Center, 4) more explanation on RZD open space process and outcome, and 5) a photo from FBC public outreach process or the illustrative Official Map.

5) FORM-BASED CODE – PUBLIIC REALM

Matt Boulanger introduced the Public Realm Section of the code and welcomed Rick Chellman from the consultant team who will be answering questions about the Street Specifications. Geoff Ferrell gave an overview presentation of the Public Realm Standards.

Geoff Ferrell explained Silva-cell system that goes underneath sidewalks so street trees can reach full maturity and live a long time with a supported root network and provide stormwater management. From the surface, it looks like a regular sidewalk and tree well, but underneath is a network of space and uncompacted soil for tree roots to grow. Geoff explained that limited height of streetlight is aesthetically better ("pedestrian scale") and illuminates more evenly.

Geoff noted Henry Arnold, a renowned landscape architect for trees (see his book "Trees in Urban Design ISBN-13: 978-0471284444). Trees grow and increase in value. Monocultures are threatened by invasive species or illness, but a variety of trees are more resilient. This depends on scale. There is a synergy comes from consistent species in small pockets and a diversity of tree species in the Growth Center

entirety. For example, a block of Oak or Gingko Trees that erupt with color during the fall. A street line or block of monoculture is okay, but throughout the district should have a variety of species. H

Geoff transition to the street standards. He noted the 6-7' sidewalks are surrounded by 5' shopfront dooryard and the greenbelt between the sidewalk and street parking so it is wider than 6' and provides more gathering space, area for café seating. He noted where vehicle lanes are reduced from 11' to 10' the extra foot is transferred for the tree line.

The commission discussed the proximity of the on-street cycle track to the vehicle lanes, especially on the Route 2A street section. Chapin Kaynor commented on ST-2A about the bike lanes so close to travel lanes, citing spray from rain and slush from car wheels onto cyclist. Chapin asked about a curbed green strip between the travel lane the cycle track. Rick Chellman explained that would double the amount of curb and green-edge to maintain and challenges with plowing. Locating the cycle track next to the sidewalk also creates conflict between pedestrian the challenges of a cycle track at-grade with sidewalks and the plowing/maintenance when an additional curb or planting strip is located between travel lane and bike lane. Meghan Cope suggested seasonal treatments, such as removable bollards or other elements give some separation between the bike lane and vehicle lane. Meghan Cope explained very little winter cycling on this kind of street. Rick noted Minneapolis and St Paul is closed but has a big cycling community because of the infrastructure.

Cycle lanes next to travel lane is designed for efficient, bicycle transportation (getting from Point A to B quickly) rather than recreation. When the treelined greenbelt is between the travel and the cycle track then cyclist must cross the 6' to 16' wide greenbelt at every intersection. The crossing would need to be smooth transition (similar to a highway on-ramp for cars) so cyclists can maintain speed and vehicles can anticipate the merging car. This makes the cycling route less efficient and complicates the greenbelt. Route 2A will have a significant amount of traffic in our lifetimes. This discussion continued, and the commission agreed this was likely the best compromise for Route 2A because it will have lots of traffic volume and be used for transportation, not recreation.

John Marcotte made a comment about the wing plows and the curb. Within reason, the plows will go up on a curb to push the snow banks back. The commission discussed maintenance and street parking. Geoff explained ST-29 section is for a one-way around a green. It is a 13' lane to provide more maneuvering rooms for parallel parking on each side. The parking spaces sizes are standard and can accommodate standard vehicles (up to 8' in width). Vehicles wider than 8' are registered as oversized. .

Geoff explained the loading and parking. This map is similar to the regulating plan map, but it determines the street section not the building forms. A printed version of this map will be made available to Commissioners. The darker green has the cycle track, noting the bicycle trails that would plug into the framework of the cycle track. Where color doesn't continue through at intersections is to acknowledge the engineering that must happen case-by-case at intersections.

Chapin asked about 36 and 38 in the street specification names. 36-38 is the pavement width including on-street parking and travel lanes. Chapin noted the one-way on-street parking around the green. G

Meghan Cope asked about off-street cycle track to the right of on-street parking. For example, a cycle track separated from the road by on-street parking. The cycle track specification should have as much consistency possible and on-street parking location would be a benefit for element of predictability for the cycle tracks, except for Roue 2A because it does not have on-street parking. Chapin questioned the reconfiguration of Zephyr Road and cycle track.

Geoff explained that the Street Section map sets build standards for existing streets. For example, the Town is not going to rebuilt Zephyr Road now, but all streets have cycles of maintenance. Finney Crossing will have incremental changes as infrastructure ages and gets rebuilt to the new specification. Chapin – need for cycle track separate from parking. On page 75

Meghan Cope regrouped on timing and other standards in Public Realm. The commission thanked Rick for his attendance and explanations. Rick left the meeting at 8:10 pm.

The discussion about Public Realm included:

- 5.1 Intent Statement. Meghan Cope, echoing comments for Shayla who is not here tonight, about the intergeneration goals of public spaces. stay attuned to needs of young children and older people. Public spaces should be welcoming, safe, interesting, and intergenerational. Mesh different populations together: children, teenagers, adults, seniors. Meghan noted good examples from European communities and cited some urban space studies.
- D(1)d. regulating the height of grass on privately owned space. Meghan Cope mentioned efforts for natural landscapes that use different species, unmoved sections, etc. There should be an exception for planned and maintained natural landscaping. Geoff said we'll make a statement to expand on than that.
- Benches and bins design are simple and classic. Spacing and placement have been vetted from prior codes.
- Discussion about the direction benches face in the Public Realm. For example, a bench too close to the street facing traffic, with people walking behind you, is not ideal. There should be a standard for the placement and orientation of benches within the social/sidewalk area. However, benches associated with a transit stop need to face the street so people can see the bus coming.
- Add language to permit artistic/creatively designed bicycle racks that meet the standard of locking both frame and front wheel. Challenge comes with electric bikes, which may have a larger frame diameter and may not fit on all racks.
- Discussion about long-term bicycle storage, bicycle lockers, covered bike parking (solar canopy?), and electric bike charging stations. Bike lockers are often a stainless steel box and about as attractive as a utility box. This is different from private parking (inside building or parking garage), but bicycling parking accessible near shop fronts and public spaces,
- If the goal is to encourage cycling as a viable form of transportation, then need to provide the infrastructure to make it viable. Taylor Newton said they can look into language and similar standards.
- Green spaces on regulating plan: light green are managed greens, where people can play catch. The dark green edges are natural areas.
- Squares and greens surrounded by trees should be mindful of Adirondack and Green Mountain Views. Some instances tree spaces or no trees to take advantage of long views of Adirondacks or Green Mountains. Town Arborist should be a long-range operational shift (2050, 2070, etc.)
- Provision of public restrooms. Important for intergeneration and inclusivity goals (children, elderly, don't need to be a paying customer to use a business bathroom). For example, the free standing wash cloth (WC's) in Burlington City Hall park. Geoff to brainstorm a standard for public restrooms. Generally, they come with the economy of people and business (downtown Burlington hosts lots of visitors).
- Coniferous vs. deciduous trees. The trees shown are deciduous and winters are long and stark. Providing evergreens to break up the species type would be good. However, coniferous trees tend to have lower branches. When lower limbs are trimmed, upper branches bend downward. Native species preferred. Gingko might be okay, but skeptical about other species.
- Pitched vs. flat roof. Flat roofs work in Mohave Desert. Managing snow on pitched roofs not done well in Vermont (despite snow dogs). Pitching roof when it could be flat makes it harder to hide mechanical and have solar mechanical.

6) **BUILDING FORM STANDARDS (Section 3)**
Link for Building Form Standards Survey: https://forms.gle/oufxgZLALw4VgtvG9

PUBLIC REALM (Section 5)
Updated Section 5

Matt Boulanger gave an overview of the survey results. General interest in height being an element of design that allows for integrating affordability, energy efficiency. Matt explained the key differences between the form areas: generally, from bigger to smaller, and commercial to residential/office with a specific section for "Main Street" shop front. Good feedback on the names to reflect Williston.

Alex Daley said he just responded to the survey before the meeting.

A discussion on ADA entrances and the challenges experienced in South Burlington. Matt noted that the South Burlington example is outside the form-based code area. Consensus that wheelchair users should not always be told to "use rear entrance." ADA often gets enforced beyond requirements. ADA does not apply to single-household residential.

A discussion about private open space and balconies. Private open area for all residents within a building vs. just that dwelling unit. Geoff explained how the 20% threshold is applied, it is only the buildable area and not side or rear setbacks (so someone cannot count a narrow space between buildings as open space). Balconies can only be used to reduce common area by so much. Limit on 30% of balconies reducing the buildable space.

A discussion about balcony opacity and wrought iron bars.

Meghan Cope requested a better definition/differentiation between stairs and stoop. What's depicted in a covered porch with uncovered stairs. "Stoop" is generally thought of not as the doorframe or landing but as the stairs. For example, "stoop culture" is sitting on the chairs and conversing with neighbors/passersby.

Shared Project Journal (editable version, check email for password)

7) ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.