

TOWN OF WILLISTON
Planning Commission
Minutes of January 18, 2022– 7:00 P.M.
Location: Zoom Meeting ID 158-006-871 on zoom.us/join or by calling 1-646-558-8656
Annex Conference Room, 7878 Williston Road
Zoom Recording: <https://youtu.be/UIncjqfsceA>

Planning Commission Present: Meghan Cope (Chair), Chapin Kaynor (Vice Chair), Cate Lamar, Jill Pardini; **Absent:** Ron Bomer (resigned), Alex Daley, Shayla Livingston
Staff: Matt Boulanger, Melinda Scott, Emily Heymann; **Public:** Ken Belliveau, David Burke, Jack Glaser, Andy Rowe, Chris Snyder, Taylor Newton, Geoff Ferrell

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:04. The Planning Commission members introduced themselves to the members of the public. Members of the public introduced themselves to the Planning Commission.

MINUTES OF January 4, 2022

Meghan and Chapin made edits to the draft document. Chapin made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Cate seconded the motion. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Items not on the agenda)

Ken Belliveau commented on building heights and recommended Commissioners take a look at the Panera on Shelburne Rd in South Burlington, his point being that the building is four stories and is quite attractive.

FY 2023 Chittenden County Planning Commission Unified Planning Work Program Requests for assistance (Information item to Planning Commission)

Matt provided the Planning Commission some information on the applications the town was submitting for the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) administered by the Chittenden Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC). Many of the proposed projects follow up on the work of Form Based Code. Matt listed the projects: Traffic Counts, Sign Inventory, Stormwater Inventory (all DPW requests); Comprehensive Plan Data Development, Affordable Housing Needs Assessment, Multimodal Hub Scoping Study, Growth Center Communal Stormwater Management System Feasibility Study. Matt noted that the Street Standards and Specifications project was dropped because it was not eligible for transportation funding. Meghan requested getting data on jobs as part of the Comprehensive Plan Data Development project.

SPECIFIC PLAN PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION- GLASER PROPERTY Discussion item, preliminary conversation, no application has been filed)

Matt stated that Jack Glaser and his representative Ken Belliveau are here to have a preliminary discussion about a potential application for a Specific Plan for a property at the corner of Mountain View and Old Stage Rd. Ken stated this property has a lot of development potential, it is in the RZD and is not developed, and is within the sewer service area. The property is approximately 97 acres, there are some wetlands that have not yet been delineated. 3DU /Acre are allowed in the RZD, so potentially over 200 dwelling units are possible on this property. The property has a primary viewshed along Mountain View Rd. This presents a potential opportunity for the town and applicant to work together to protect an important asset and have less development on the property, in exchange for allowing the applicant to move forward on a quicker time frame than the current Growth Management system would allow. Jack Glaser spoke about the property. He and his wife purchased the property in the early 2000s from the Ezermans, and they are longtime residents. They are no longer able to stay at this property and keep it open. They feel this is a prime spot to develop responsibly. They want to

provide housing and keep as much of the property conserved as possible. Want to work with the town to make that happen.

Chapin stated they have received comments from the public that are relevant, and he would like to share them. He asked what the public benefit would be? Preserving open space would be valued. An east west nonmotorized offroad corridor would also be valuable, with the idea to connect over to Catamount. Another benefit is related to energy. The town's energy plan goals are best met by development that is clustered and buildings with shared walls are more efficient to heat. As for the public benefit, Ken referred to the Specific Plan criteria that the Planning Commission needs to consider for public benefit. Open space is one criterion. The viewshed has been identified in the town plans as desirable to protect. That is the low hanging fruit and easiest benefit to offer. Jack noted that they are big advocates of clustered development and reducing the footprint on the land. Ken stated that they would hope to get some feedback from the Planning Commission on whether this has any potential, prior to submitting an application.

Meghan stated that Specific Plans take a lot of time because of the amount of work in addition to what is already on the workplan. Meghan noted that there was a substantial citizen outcry in response to potential development of this property a couple years ago so there is likely to be a lot of concern from the public. In general, people are really tired of development in Williston. Chapin asked Ken if the primary reason for a Specific Plan is to get an accelerated growth management allocation schedule, and Ken stated yes and also to be able to protect the open space that might not happen with traditional development process.

Matt talked about growth management and how difficult it is for some applicants, and stated he is happy to talk to Commissioners about the benefits and shortcomings of growth management. Cate asked if there is any preliminary plan or design, vision of what they want for the property? Ken stated they are just starting and the first step is to do a constraints analysis before creating a plan. They would like to work with the town to see what might be desirable. Meghan thanked Ken and Jack for attending and stated she would like Shayla and Alex to be included in a discussion about the proposal before giving feedback.

SPECIFIC PLAN PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION- SNYDER (Discussion item, preliminary conversation, no application has been filed)

Matt introduced the request. He noted the project has gone through preapplication hearing and is eligible for Growth Management, but the Growth Management limitations would present some challenges to the applicant. Chris Snyder spoke about the project. He stated there is an opportunity for public benefit - faster construction schedule would mean less disruption to surrounding properties, and they would propose more housing than is allowed under the current density limits. They are proposing multifamily housing, and with a Specific Plan they would dedicate one building for affordable housing at 100% median. The other substantial benefit is to construct a bridge over the Allen Brook, connecting Finney Crossing and Brennan Woods. When Finney was built the developer gave the town an easement for a future connection, the proposed bridge and path would use that easement. It would be similar to the existing bike bridge along Rt 2A. In exchange they are requesting to move forward in the permitting process with their plan as proposed, even though it would not conform to Form Based Code. Chris feels that much of what's proposed does conform but some of it does not. Given the current scenario with the Form Based Code starting the public hearing process, they might have to redesign their project at discretionary permit. Chris stated Growth Management doesn't work well for large apartment buildings. When Finney Crossing was permitted, they had to wait several years from when they obtained the first approval to actually start construction because of the Growth Management allocation system. The density of the development would be higher than what is currently allowed and the allocation schedule would be modified, but in exchange the town would be getting the two proposed public benefits.

Cate asked how much revision would need to happen to conform to Form Based Code? Chris stated the street layout would need to change substantially. Matt stated the Regulating Plan dictates exactly

where the streets need to be located, and the buildings would need to be pulled up to the street and would need to meet the Code requirements related to dimension and form, as well as architectural standards, which are much more restrictive than the current bylaw. Cate asked about the public benefit. She thinks the bridge and path location doesn't provide a huge public benefit to the town at large, only to Brennan Woods. Chris stated he thinks a lot of people would use it.

Jill asked what percentage of the total units affordable housing would make up, and Chris stated a little less than 20%. Jill asked about whether the affordable units would have the same access to amenities as the market rate units, and stated that is important. Chris agreed, and stated that is the case at Finney today.

Chapin stated there is already a lot of residential development in the northeast quadrant and would rather see open space in this quadrant that would serve all the residences currently there. This project does not propose any public amenities. Chapin noted that once you cross the bridge into Brennan Woods you are faced with a convoluted network of streets so would not be a meaningful connection. Chapin noted the shrinking green space in Finney Crossing. He is concerned that there are houses shown on the plan too near forested areas and that once people move in, they will want to remove trees that threaten homes. He is disappointed that there is no proposed recreation path open to the public.

Chris noted that they donated 35 acres of open space to the town when Finney was developed, north of the Allen Brook. He noted the utilization of the bike path throughout the neighborhood in Finney. He noted the wetland in the middle of the Essex Alliance property that would constrain where paths could go.

Meghan commented that she likes the Regulating Plan and Form Based Code, it creates a lot of benefits including energy use, public space, etc. Meghan supports moving people away from a car-oriented lifestyle to the extent possible because we have to for the planet. She feels the design is still very car oriented. She would prefer to see a plan that is more aligned with Form Based Code. Meghan stated she is not compelled by 100% AMI affordable housing. Chris stated 80% AMI is unachievable without government subsidies. He understands there is a need for 80% AMI affordable and below. He said the middle level 80-100 AMI is also needed. Meghan thanked Chris for coming.

Chapin has questions he will send to staff to follow up on.

PREPARE FOR Taft Corners Form-Based Code PUBLIC HEARING

Emily stated staff wanted to give PC members a preview of the hearing draft and an agenda for the hearing, and talked about the process. She said an informational session during a Selectboard meeting is tentatively planned for March 15. Meghan thanked Emily for all her careful preparation. Emily stated she has been doing a lot of outreach, and Meghan asked whether PC members should also post about the hearings on Front Porch Forum. Emily said it would help. Emily said the packets are ready in the bin outside for PC members to pick up.

8:00 PM REVIEW FBC HEARING DRAFT "Version PH-1"

Emily reviewed some of the topics talked about previously. Staff is working with CCRPC and consultant Geoff Ferrell on administrative checklists and process to make sure its transparent and will streamline the staff effort. Emily talked about the parking requirements and noted that there is no limit on shared parking. The goal is to get the regulations out of the way and let developers build what market conditions support. Emily requested feedback on Uniquely Williston names for the Building Form Districts. Meghan asked Cate whether she had any further comments on parking. Cate is still concerned about the low minimum for residential parking. Emily stated people will likely develop the maximum parking allowed.

Building Form Names – Chapin said he likes Taft Corners Core or Urban Core. Geoff suggested calling Urban General Core or Center and calling Urban General 2 Urban Neighborhood. Meghan said get rid of the word Urban, because its off-putting. People are not prepared to see a city here, it's not helpful

to the cause. Geoff suggested using the work Town instead. Meghan is fine with Town Core or Town Center. Chapin suggested Taft Corners Center. Chapin suggested starting with TC for each designation – TC Center, TC Storefront, TC Neighborhood. Jill asked about naming after streams or something on the land. Chapin suggested looking for information on traditional Abenaki names, and Meghan suggested soliciting help from the State Archaeologists.

Emily summarized the project journal info. Geoff noted that he inserted images of solar into the current revisions.

9:00 PM ADJOURN