

TOWN OF WILLISTON
Planning Commission
Minutes of May 5, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.
Location: Zoom Meeting ID 158-006-871 on zoom.us/join or 1-646-558-8656

Planning Commission Present: Chapin Kaynor (chair), Cate Lamar, Meghan Cope, G. Miller, Ron Bomer; **Absent:** Jill Pardini, Shayla Livingston; **Staff:** Matt Boulanger, Emily Heymann; **Public:** Jeff Nick, Brian Forrest

1) CALL TO ORDER

Chapin Kaynor called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3) [MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2020](#)

On a motion made by Ron Bomer and seconded by G Miller the minutes were approved unanimously with minor amendments.

4) [PLANNER'S CORNER NEWSLETTER](#)

Emily Heymann gave a brief overview of the new blog format (previously posted to Front Porch Forum) which will be sent directly to subscribers by email. Please reach out if you have an idea for a blog post topic or would like to see other information published.

5) ZONING BOUNDARY AMENDMENT REQUEST

- a. [Request Letter from Property Owner](#)
- b. [Property Sketch submitted by Owner](#)
- c. [Staff Memo](#)
- d. [Zoning Map Detail](#)

Matt Boulanger gave an overview of the request and the procedures for amending the bylaw, and framed the Planning Commission's decision for a preliminary request like this one. Matt Boulanger and Meghan Cope explained the history of the Gateway Zoning District West (GZDW), the logic behind its creation, and the desired goals. Meghan Cope is the only current member who was on the Commission during the creation of the GZDW. She explained that former member Kevin Batson was concerned with the visual aesthetic of the entry points to Williston, this area included.

Jeff Nick provided further clarification on the request. He assisted the Robears with the recent subdivision (DP 18-21). He gave an overview of the Robear subdivision, noting that VTrans wants to consolidate curb cuts onto Williston Road and would not permit the third curb cut. He explained that the Robears were not in favor of the rezoning of their land from industrial to gateway. He explained the challenge of developing lots 1 and 2; that the lots share a curb cut and access, but have different allowed uses; the uncertainty is difficult to market; the opportunity to merge Lot 1 with Greer lot to the east has not arisen and is unlikely. Jeff Nick explained that the allowed uses, primarily residential and office in the GZDW are not desirable and there is an abundance of vacant office space elsewhere in Williston. There is not a demand for residential housing in this area because of the airport flight path.

The group discussed the Town Plan's guidance for the industrial areas of town, including the challenges of industrial properties abutting or encroaching into residential areas. For example, the

Planning Commission reviewed a zoning change request last fall for nearby house on South Brownell Road. The transitional strip was created decades ago across from residential properties, and the noise/odor problems are still a challenge for the neighborhood today.

There was a concern about losing the design review gained from gateway by switching the lot back to industrial. The group discussed the challenges of applying Chapter 22 Design Review overlay to the industrial district. The chimney supply store at the corner of Commerce Street and Williston Road is a recent example of the design review application to an industrial property. The group discussed the parking standards between gateway and industrial. The site layout comes from zoning district chapter, but the building design and articulations comes from the design review chapter. The group discussed the wide variety of uses allowed in the industrial district. Some industrial uses lend themselves to design review and an aesthetically pleasing gateway area more than others. For example, service commercial/bulky retail compared to heavy industrial uses along avenues A, B, C, and D.

Chapin Kaynor asked the staff for guidance on next steps. Matt Boulanger suggest this request should be a part of a broad examination of the industrial zoning district. He noted the upcoming PC work plan with the Energy Plan/Public Health hearings, bylaw revisions, and the potential for Form- Based Code kick-off in July. The process doesn't need to get in the weeds, but open up geographically and into the design review standards. Matt suggested adding language to Chapter 22 about how to handle design review in the industrial district. By mid-summer, Planning staff can return to the Planning Commission with a brief outline of the potential amendments to the bylaw. Then, the Planning Commission can decide on the detail of amendments, request public input, or additional data before opening a public hearing on the amendment(s) in the fall at the earliest.

The conversation concluded around 7:15-7:20 PM.

6) NOTICES FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

- a. [Richmond](#)
- b. [Shelburne](#)

Matt Boulanger gave an overview of the proposed amendments. They are minor in nature and will not impact Williston.

7) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC HEARING – PUBLIC HEALTH

- a. [Town Plan Public Health Edits](#)

The hearing was opened at 7:25 PM.

Planning staff linked to the wrong version of the document in the agenda. The linked version did not include the edits by Commission members from March 3rd, before the amendments were warned for public. Planning staff screenshared the correct version with March 3rd edits.

The Commission discussed Edwin DeMott's proposed changes to section 3.1.5. The general consensus of the commission was the wording of the statement is misleading and confusing: particularly the phrase, "defaulting to residents' priorities." The general consensus was to either remove this statement outright, or modify & relocate. It is an aspiration for there to be equitable process in the Town Plan section about land use rules. One would hope all planning tasks, not just form-based code, are done with good public process.

The hearing was continued at 8:57 PM to the May 19, 2020.

8) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC HEARING – ENERGY PLAN

- a. [Working Edits Document](#)
- b. [Click here for the hearing draft, and maps](#)

The hearing reopened at 9:00 PM.

Brian Forrest provided feedback to the Planning Commission. He asked about pathways 5.5 and 5.6. Emily Heymann explained that the wording was changed from “require” to “incentivize” because municipalities do not have the authority to require or prohibit utilities that are regulated by the Public Utility Commission (PUC).

Meghan Cope’s changes to the introduction will be presented at the May 19th meeting. G Miller will also send some recommended edits to Emily via email.

The hearing was continued to May 19, 2020.

8) ADJOURN - The meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM.

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