

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 7, 2010**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Liza Kilcoyne (Chair); John Alden, Diane Clemens, Nick Meyer, Dan Kerin, Andrew Boutin. (Aaron Martin was absent.)

ADMINISTRATION: Robin Pierce, Development Director; Terry Hass, Assistant Zoning Administrator.

SITE VISIT

Prior to the start of the regular meeting the Planning Commission did a site visit to the North Street/Grove Street neighborhood.

1. CALL TO ORDER and AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

Chairwoman Liza Kilcoyne called the meeting to order at 7 PM and reviewed planned agendas as follows:

- October 21, 2010 - Public input on requested zoning changes, continued work on update of LDC.
- November 4, 2010 – Wrap up work on update of LDC.
- November 18, 2010 – Review final draft of updated LDC from consultant.
- December 9, 2010 – First of two public hearings on updated LDC.
- December 16, 2010 – Second public hearing on updated LDC, approval by Planning Commission, forward to Board of Trustees for adoption.

Audience for Visitors

There were no comments from the public.

2. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 5, 2010

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Andrew Boutin, to approve the 8/5/10 minutes as written. VOTING: 5 ayes, one abstention (Clemens); motion carried.

September 16, 2010

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Nick Meyer, to approve the 9/16/10 minutes with the correction of the name “David Burke”. VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.

4. WORK SESSION: UPDATE OF LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE (LDC)

Old Colchester Road Zoning Change Request

The Planning Commission discussed the request to change the zoning on Old Colchester Road to allow greater residential density. Presently, there are single family dwellings

with sizable lots, and single family houses on smaller lots closer to the high school property. The property owner who requested the change has options to develop his property without the zoning change (a planned residential development can be done). It was felt compelling evidence to make the zoning change was not presented and there should be comment from the neighbors on the proposed change. A majority of the Planning Commission felt there was no reason to change the zoning at this time. Staff will draft a letter to the two residents on Old Colchester Road stating insufficient information has been submitted to consider the requested change.

Historic Preservation & Design Control – Sections 604 & 201.87-88

It was noted historic preservation and design control affects only buildings in the Village Center District and provides a process when demolishing a building as well as clear reasons why a building cannot be torn down. The regulations provide a way to protect what the community has deemed an important part of the “fabric” of the village. There was discussion of ‘softening’ the tie to the Secretary of Interiors standards by using the standards for guidance rather than required compliance. Robin Pierce suggested there should be language that says “the Planning Commission reserves the right to require the development be undertaken per Secretary of Interiors standards”. Village staff could provide guidance to the applicant on what the Planning Commission expects with historic structures. Liza Kilcoyne said the building owner should demonstrate what they are doing to meet the guidelines to the best of their ability. There was discussion of having regulations in place to deal with fire damaged historic buildings to ensure that rehabilitation or demolition is done in a timely manner.

Protection of Open Space – Sections 613.G.3(b), 724.A.2, and 908

There was discussion of allowing more dense development to provide more open space. The Planning Commission requested an example of “superior design” that would qualify a project to be reviewed under the PUD (Planned Unit Development) or PRD (Planned Residential Development) standards. The consultant will supply an example.

Affordable Housing – Section 724.A.2

There was discussion and agreement the density bonus can be increased if an affordable housing component is included in the development (Section 724.A.2(h)). “Affordable” is as determined by VHCB or VHFA standards.

Native Species for Landscaping – Section 719.E

There was agreement the landscaping list needs to be updated with the new allowed list of native species.

Master Planning – Section 502.R

The Planning Commission agreed it is very helpful to have a master plan for larger development proposals.

Grove, North, Central Street Zoning Change

There was comment that a change in zoning will provide the opportunity for over half of the properties on Grove, North, and Central to become two family dwellings. There are

neighborhood residents who are struggling to make the neighborhood a nice place to live and there is concern a change to two family dwellings could change the character of the area. Management of the property and the tenants are two important factors. There will likely be more renters and some renters may not be desirable. Also, having more dwelling units and residents means more traffic on the residential streets which are very narrow (the right-of-way width including the road is 49.5' on Central Street, 40' on Grove Street, and 41.25' on North Street). The area has a "crowded, congested feel" now. If converted to two family dwellings the lots must meet lot coverage allowances and parking requirements. On-street parking is not allowed. The village needs the ability to enforce any fire or safety violations with rental units. The inspection program in Winooski and Burlington was mentioned (the program requires inspection of rental units every two years to confirm compliance to fire/safety codes). The village may want to consider subcontracting inspection services from the Winooski or Burlington program. John Alden commented the change in zoning to allow more residential rental units may be an opportunity to balance housing in the village. Nick Meyer observed the neighborhood is older and established. There is a large multi-family rental unit down the street. It is good to have mixed housing in appropriate places, but the fabric of the older homes and neighborhoods should be maintained. Diane Clemens suggested allowing the transition through accessory apartments rather than a change in zoning at this point in time. The majority of the Planning Commission was in favor of tabling the requested change and notifying the neighbors of the upcoming public meeting for comment.

5. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

None.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Liza Kilcoyne, SECOND by Nick Meyer, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.

RScty: M.E.Riordan