

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 3, 2013**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Diane Clemens, John Alden, Aaron Martin, Nick Meyer, Amber Thibeault. (Nick Meyer, Andrew Boutin and David Nistico were absent.)

ADMINISTRATION: Robin Pierce, Development Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Regina Mahony, Regional Planning

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order
2. Audience for Visitors
3. Additions/Amendments to the Agenda
4. Work Session – Discussion of Comprehensive Plan Update
5. Other Planning Commission Items
6. Adjournment

1. CALL TO ORDER

Diane Clemens called the meeting to order at 6:07 PM.

2. AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

There were no comments from the public at this time.

3. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Robin Pierce explained that approval of the minutes from the last meeting are not included on the agenda because the job description for “Planning Commissioner” amended by the Planning Commission at the last meeting was not open to discussion. Mr. Pierce said he assumed the Trustees were inviting comment on the description and he included the material in the meeting packet. Mr. Pierce will discuss the description further with the Village Manager.

Add to agenda:

- Planning Commission Meeting and Work Session Calendar

4. WORK SESSION – Discussion of Comprehensive Plan Update

Regina Mahony, Regional Planning, made the following comments/revisions to the Planning Commission calendar:

- Housing section will be discussed at the November 7th meeting (Maura Collins working on a grant).
- Ag and Land Use moved to January 2, 2014 meeting.
- Economic Development material will be sent to the Planning Commission prior to the November 7th meeting.
- Transportation will be covered at the February 6th, 2014 work session when Utilities/Facilities are covered. Jim Jutras will be invited to attend.
- Mark Paulsen with the Trails Committee and Rick Hamlin with the Bike/Walk Committee will be invited to attend discussion of Open Space/Recreation at the December 5th, 2013 meeting.

- Regarding the Energy section, the zoning administrator now has to inform applicants of energy codes for residential/commercial applications and ensure the code is met before a certificate of occupancy is issued. John Alden is going to attend an energy code workshop. Aaron Martin will ask a member of the town's energy and conservation committee to attend the work session when the Energy section of the plan is discussed.
- Peter Keating, Regional Planning, has reviewed the Transportation chapter and made some edits.
- Master plan for bike/ped needs to be included in the calendar.

The Planning Commission calendar will be published in the local newspaper, posted on the village website, on Front Porch Forum, in the village newsletter, and on the Downtown EJ Facebook page.

The memo from Regina Mahony, dated 9/12/13, regarding recommended edits to the comprehensive plan was reviewed. The following was noted:

- There is a list of historic buildings in the village with a brief explanation of why the building is historic. The list needs to be updated to confirm the building still exists and if the historic value has changed in any way.
- Additions to the plan include:
 - Crescent Connector road
 - Pedestrianizing a section of Main Street
 - Addition of bike lanes
 - Lighting in the village
- There was discussion of the streetlights on Pearl Street by the fairgrounds and if the same lighting will be applied across the village.
- There must be a vibrant downtown with no empty store fronts in the designated Village Center. Presently after 8 PM in the village there is nothing open except bars and restaurants.
- A joint meeting with the town and village planning commissions needs to be scheduled to discuss each municipality's plan and tie-in to both.
- Language is needed in the comprehensive plan that makes it clearer and easier to make changes to the zoning bylaws (Land Development Code).
- Consideration should be given to adding design review and a designated Village Center overlay to the plan.
- The designated Village Center should be mapped.
- A tree inventory needs to be included in the document.

Chapter I – Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan

- Regina Mahony will update the process.

Chapter II – General Background

- Regina Mahony to double check consistency with the village plan and plans of surrounding towns and the regional plan.
- John Alden urged ensuring there is language in the village plan in the Transportation section to protect the village from traffic impacts by roads in surrounding towns.

Chapter III – Community Vision and Strategies

- Heart & Soul information will be merged with the general goals of the village.

- Help is needed in educating the public on what is in the comprehensive plan and the Land Development Code, and that it is the LDC that guides decisions on development applications in the village.
- Wording needs to be added to the land use and downtown goal referring to encouraging infill and redevelopment to emphasize the target is underutilized properties in the mixed use district and that this is the direction of growth the village is seeking.
- Form based code is one approach to address the challenges and framework of development. With form based code what development will look like can be shown in 3-D format and feedback can be gathered from the public earlier in the process. Concern was expressed about the potential to restrict differences in buildings. Robin Pierce commented it is all about massing, scale, roof angles. A goal could be added to the plan to explore application of form based code.
- John Alden expressed concern about the language pertaining to maintaining the character of the village as a traditional New England village under the Community section and the result being all buildings looking the same. Suggestion was made to insert “urban” before ‘village’ to read “...traditional New England style urban village...” since the village is urban. “Urban services” should be changed to just say “services”.
- Under Neighborhood the language saying “preserve existing neighborhoods” should be changed to say “maintain” or “respect existing neighborhoods”. There was agreement the wording should be “respect existing neighborhoods”.
- Add “dynamic” to the ‘land use’ description.
- The goals and objectives section in Chapter III needs to be updated Village annual reports from 2007 to the present should be reviewed to compile the list of completed objectives which include but are not limited to:
 - Lincoln Street sidewalk
 - Train station improvements and multi-use path
 - Farmers market
 - Biking/walking designation
 - Strengthening design review in the village center
 - Approval of the ‘missing link’ on Pearl Street (shopping center to fire station) to widen the road, add bike lanes, and lighting
 - Waste water treatment plant upgrade
 - High School pump station replacement
 - IBM technology park conversion to campus style
 - Master plan for IBM property
 - Police station on former IBM parcel
 - Tree farm recreation area
 - Dog park
 - Skateboard and BMX facilities at Maple Street Park
 - Community garden expansion
 - Approval and work on the Crescent Connector Road.
- Reference to the RKG Report in Objective 1.2 needs to be confirmed as being relevant at this point in time.
- Objective 3.1 needs to be clear on what is being preserved and why. The word “preserve” in the statement pertaining to historic village character could be difficult to work around.

What is wanted in the village needs to be encouraged and the language in the plan should be clear on this.

- Goal #5 should be rewritten to read: "...establish policies to ensure continuation of adequate provision of services in the village..." since the M&E subsidy paid by IBM has ended.

5. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

Next Meeting

- October 17, 2013

Agenda Items

- Applications (if any)
- Work Session on Update of Comprehensive Plan (begin with review Ch. IV)

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Amber Thibeault, SECOND by Aaron Martin, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM.

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