

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 2, 2014**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Robin Pierce, Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Greg Morgan, Regina Mahoney, J.C. McCann.

AGENDA:

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Diane Clemens called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

2. AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

There were no comments at this time from the public.

3. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

None.

4. MINUTES

December 19, 2013

Minutes not available.

5. WORK SESSION: Comprehensive Plan Update

Business/Economic Development

Greg Morgan, Chairman of the Essex Business & Economic Development Commission, reviewed the work of the five member commission and the recommendation that the Trustees adopt the commission and its work effort for the village. Mr. Morgan noted the following:

- There are three focus points of commercial and industrial space: IBM site with 300,000 s.f., 30 Allen Martin Drive/former Building 617 with 420,000 s.f., and Saxon Hill with 750,000 s.f.
- Data sources for business information includes the database of *Vermont Business Magazine* and the information collected by Darby Mayville after contacting every retail establishment in the village.
- Three of the top 12 employers are in the village (IBM, USCIS/Department of Homeland Security, Flex-a-Seal). ALPLA which is a plastics extruder

manufacturing k-cups is located on River Road. ASK-int TAG is located on the IBM campus and makes reader card chips.

- Other assets to the town include AAA and Champlain Valley Agency on Aging.
- The committee prioritized strategies to support economic development and suggested the following:
 - Improvements on major roads
 - Industrial park evaluation
 - Government service retention and expansion
 - Regional multimodal improvements
 - Marketing
 - IBM site initiative
 - Infill development
- The economic development committee is in support of planning for changes with Vermont's largest private sector employers, recognizing local farmers market participants, highlighting niche businesses in the village, and promoting entrepreneurs and startups.

There was discussion of including the Tech Center in the list of employers and the reliability of the employer information. Greg Morgan said the list may not be complete. Any employer can ask to be included in the business directory. Suggestions for enhancing the reliability of the information are welcomed.

There was discussion of what should be included in the comprehensive plan to encourage incubator space. Greg Morgan urged talking to developers and informing them of the vision for the village and how the village can help make development happen. The village's community development director should seek and promote opportunity for economic development. A fair process for developers should exist and the public should be invited into the process. There has not been significant investment in the village in the past 30 years, but now this is happening and people are resistant to change which is off-putting to developers. Business owners need to get involved in economic development in the village as well. Internet band width to support businesses is also vital. The village has DSL and is connected, but is far down on the list for fiber optics. John Alden suggested choosing a few sites/buildings in the village, such as the McClure building, and advertising that the village supports redevelopment of the site. Nick Meyer mentioned the federal building that is underutilized. Space could be leased to businesses.

Energy

J.C. McCann, Essex Energy Committee, reviewed the language for the Energy section of the plan drafted by the Energy Committee. Mr. McCann stated:

- The section should be short and to the point or people will not read it.
- Energy is changing very rapidly so the text will quickly be outdated.
- Energy is important to quality of life.
- Money drives energy efficiency.
- The state has good energy standards which the village should use. The standards are updated every three years.

- Community based forms of alternate energy should be encouraged. Siting is very important.
- “Renewable energy” is defined by the state.
- Electricity is the ‘go-to’ energy in Vermont for the future. Hydro-Quebec is considered green energy. There are many outstanding questions, such as who pays for charging, will performance hold up in cold weather, impact of price increases by Hydro-Quebec.
- Conservation is the cheapest form of energy. The best way to deal with energy is to use less (turn off the switch).
- Exterior lighting in the village is a disaster. The village pays a tariff on streetlights and is charged more with LEDs. The tariff covers equipment and maintenance.
- The comprehensive plan needs to reflect easing in “dark sky” standards over the course of 20 years.
- Floodlights should be banned.
- An audit for lighting on public buildings should be done.
- There should be discussion with residents on decorative lighting and weatherizing homes. Property value should increase, but property taxes should not increase if energy efficiency measures are implemented by homeowners.
- Services from Efficiency Vermont should be used by homeowners (the services are already paid for via a fee on the electric bill).

Greg Morgan suggested the village plan make note of the hydro plant in the village and programs through Efficiency Vermont to weatherize houses. Vermont Gas will do a free energy audit. There was further discussion of disseminating information on energy efficiency including sending out an energy volunteer to help individuals or hosting an information table at the annual village meeting.

Regional Mahoney provided suggested language for the energy section of the comprehensive plan for review by the Planning Commission.

6. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

Next Meeting: January 16, 2014

Agenda: Comprehensive Plan Update (continued). Staff will resend Chapters 1-4.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by David Nistico, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (7-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Rcdg Scty: MERiordan

