

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 6, 2014**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Robin Pierce, Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Regina Mahoney, Liz Subin, Greg Duggan, Diana Ferguson, Matt Whalen.

- 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 6:05 PM and noted correspondence received from Champlain Housing Trust regarding a presentation on February 13, 2014 at 5:30 PM at Kings Street entitled "Housing Gap and Policy Answers". All are invited to attend.

2. AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

None.

3. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

None.

4. MINUTES

December 19, 2013

MOTION by Aaron Martin, **SECOND** by Nick Meyer, to approve the December 19, 2013 minutes as written. **VOTING:** unanimous (7-0); motion carried.

January 2, 2014 & January 16, 2014

MOTION by John Alden, **SECOND** by Nick Meyer, to approve the January 16, 2014 as written and January 2, 2014 with the following correction(s)/clarification(s):

Page 3, bullet reading "the comprehensive plan needs to reflect..." – it was clarified the village already requires compliance with "dark sky" standards;
Page 3, paragraph beginning "Regional Mahoney provided..." – correct the spelling of "Regina".

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

5. WORK SESSION: Comprehensive Plan Update

Thoughtful Growth

Liz Subin and Greg Duggan read an excerpt from the Heart & Soul report on the meaning of 'thoughtful growth' according to approximately 1,000 citizens who participated in the neighborhood conversations facilitated by Heart & Soul. Regina Mahoney noted the work of Heart & Soul is weaved into Chapters 1-4 of the comprehensive plan so far. Robin Pierce suggested the Heart & Soul logo and the ECOS logo be incorporated in the plan to memorialize the work that has been done. Ms. Mahoney suggested including a matrix showing how the village is addressing the six Heart & Soul values and goals from each chapter in the plan. The same could be done with the eight ECOS strategies. John Alden said Heart & Soul and ECOS need to be recognized in the preface of the plan as major contributors to establishing input from the community and the surrounding area. Mr. Alden stressed the input must continue during the update of the Land Development Code.

As an exercise the Planning Commission noted in the first four sections of the Land Use section of the comprehensive plan where the six core community values including thoughtful growth occur. Liz Subin and Greg Duggan will review the results.

It was noted the final presentation and celebration of what has been learned through Heart & Soul is 2/10/14 at 5 PM at the high school.

Land Use

The Planning Commission reviewed changes to the Land Use chapter. The following was noted:

- Proposed language pertaining to the 'thoughtful growth' value is added to the Land Use introductory text. It was mentioned there is some redundancy of the thoughtful growth text in the document.
- Having a joint meeting with town and village planning commissions to discuss preservation of open space was suggested.
- The town has open space and growth area while the village has parks and redevelopment area.
- The village is built out so density must be increased in order to grow.
- The village does not have open space to address in Land Use, but rather should have language speaking of urban center development.
- In order to preserve any open space in the village development must get denser. The plan addresses this, but the challenge is to help people visualize what the plan is trying to accomplish so that what is designed and built does not shock people.
- It is a big effort to get visualization in the plan. There is an education component to get residents and the community to embrace higher density because it honors the fabric of the village.
- The educational component may be more effective with the update of the Land Development Code. The plan could have a goal or objective of having the education component. The code could include a pictorial showing allowed density, height, a transit oriented district in the village, for example, but not dictate how development must look. The village website could show pictorial representations and renderings.

- Heart & Soul discussions showed that participants like the Five Corners village center as an urban center and the rural areas in the town. People identified the village downtown as the ‘center’ as opposed to Lang Farm. People identified with the village center urban part of the town outside the village and the village itself. Suzie Wilson Road, the town center, and Saxon Hill/Allen Martin Drive were identified as the town’s growth areas.
- The town plan for Essex Town only has a small mention of the village. The village does not exist in the economic engine of the town.
- The village and town have a symbiotic relationship that needs to be reflected in both plans, but the village is a special space and place within the town; the village is distinct from the town.
- The village plan acknowledges coordinating with neighboring municipalities.
- A good exercise would be to try to incorporate more of each municipality in each plan’s update.
- Zoning maps of the two municipalities could overlay to show the zoning districts. Land uses beyond the borders of the village should be mentioned in the plan.
- There are amendments to the town plan for vote at town meeting in March. If the amendments are approved the town plan update is four years out. If the amendments are not approved then the update is two years out.

Housing

The Planning Commission reviewed changes to the Housing chapter. The following was noted:

- Table X was added providing an historical perspective of housing from 1960-2010. The data show a trend though the specific numbers may not be precise.
- Table 7 showing the households in Essex Junction 2010 was amended so the data points shown add up to the household number of 3,875.
- Text was clarified in Section 7.3 (Building Activity) to focus on areas planned for growth and providing the village’s share of affordable housing. In order to maintain the concept of the village center surrounded by rural landscape at some point density must be increased and if done with proper design the fabric of the neighborhood will not be lost. A goal could be to bring forth the education component on density.
- Encouraging a diverse range of housing is good and the vision should show where the village wants to go. The language should identify places planned for growth and what the village wants, such as affordable housing. The village has the Village Center District and other mechanisms that focus where the village wants development. Language could be added to highlight incentives for certain types of housing in identified growth areas.
- Regina Mahoney will research information on housing types in Essex Junction versus Chittenden County.
- Section 7.3 (Building Activity) was modified as follows:
 - In the 3rd paragraph, sentence reading “In light of these needs the village is working to provide its share of a diverse range of housing...” - replace “provide its share” with “encourage” and delete the sentence reading “In

addition, the village is providing affordable housing to address these needs.”

- Regina Mahoney will rework Figure 4 (Housing Growth by Type 2000-2012) on Page 49 of the plan to reflect that the increase or drop-off in the number of units is due to projects being completed in a certain year (i.e. 2010) and the economy taking a severe downturn in 2011. The topic is addressed fairly well in the Housing chapter overall.
- In Section 7.6 (Housing Goals), Objective 1.5, the word “zone” should be changed to “zoning” and Objective 1.10 added to read: “Consider zoning change to create pocket parks or other public urban open space amenities.”

Transportation

CCTA would like to discuss transportation with the Planning Commission when that section of the plan is reviewed.

Ag & Forestry

The Planning Commission will forward comments to Robin Pierce for discussion at the next meeting.

6. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

- Grant funding for the plan update is exhausted June 17, 2014.
- Upcoming events:
 - Heart & Soul Celebration - February 10th
 - Application review (56 Main Street) and plan update work session – February 20th
 - Plan update work session – March 6th
 - Joint meeting with Essex Planning Commission and plan update work session – March 20th
- Village Trustees requested a liaison from the Planning Commission for the tree, bike, and capital committees.
- Village Trustees requested the Planning Commission review and comment on the planning section on the village webpage. Past projects up to Year 2013 are listed, but active projects are not listed.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Aaron Martin, SECOND by John Alden, to adjourn the meeting.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Rcdg Scty: MERiordan 