

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
April 17, 2014**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Robin Pierce, Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Greg Rabideau, Brett Grabowski, Chris Lathrop, Jeff Nick.

AGENDA:

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Diane Clemens called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM and noted without a quorum no action can be taken on agenda items.

2. AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

Greg Rabideau representing the approved redevelopment project at 4 Pearl Street discussed a proposal to convert the property at 8 Pearl Street (which is again up for sale) to additional parking for the retail portion of the 4 Pearl Street project. Two possible Sketch plans were shown of the lot at 8 Pearl Street one completely converted to parking and the second with a portion of the house retained and the remainder of the lot converted to parking. The house is on the National Register and part of the village inventory for the Historic Village Center. The house needs significant repair and the developer felt restoring the house would not be economically viable. The cost of restoration would require a very high rent for the space. The Planning Commission was asked for an opinion on removing the house and adding parking to the site or if there might be a Village purpose or communal use for the house if the house is maintained on the lot. Removal of the house would have to be approved by the Planning Commission and Vermont Department of Historic Preservation.

Observations from the Planning Commission included:

- The concern about lack of parking for the retail portion of the proposed development at 4 Pearl Street was expressed when the proposal was reviewed and still remains.
- Removing the historic structure at 8 Pearl Street (house) and converting the lot to parking allows parking along Route 15 to begin to “creep” up Pearl Street to other historic buildings. This is a concern.
- The Planning Commission has been hesitant to allow parking facing the street. In an attempt to maintain a ‘village feel’ parking should be behind the building.

Parking in the front of the lot in the village historic district is expressly prohibited in the LDC. (The applicant noted there are ways to make parking “disappear” with decorative walls and such.)

- Maintaining the building and gaining parking on the westerly side only (where the loading area was approved at 4 Pearl Street) is one possibility to consider. (The applicant noted the price of gaining only 11 parking spaces as opposed to 18 if the building is removed would be very expensive. The house at 8 Pearl Street is marginal in its leasability.)
- A Village purpose or communal use of the house may be possible. Further investigation is needed. There are organizations in the Village looking for space and if the house is up for donation or trade for parking an arrangement might be possible. There is concern about the presence of lead paint in the house at 8 Pearl Street especially if young children will be in the space.

Diane suggested that the developer could provide illustrations of the site with the building removed. Greg Rabideau will return to a future Planning Commission meeting when a quorum is present with more illustrations of options for the properties at 4 Pearl & 8 Pearl Street.

3. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Robin Pierce announced the Village received a Federal Finding of No Significant Impact by the Crescent Connector roadway so the project can move forward with development of plans and right-of-way acquisition.

4. MINUTES

April 3, 2014

Postponed until the next meeting due to lack of a quorum.

5. WORK SESSION: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Transportation

The following was noted:

- The responses from CCTA to questions from the Planning Commission were reviewed. There was agreement the Village is served fairly well by CCTA.
- The text on CCTA in the plan is now much clearer than in the past.
- Every occurrence of “five corners” in the text should be shown as a proper name (i.e. as “Five Corners” with capitals).
- In Section 8.4 (Public Transportation) – delete or explain the statement reading: “Error! Reference source not found. provides the most recent history of ridership on this service which is experiencing rising popularity.”
- In Section 8.6 (Transportation Goals):
 - Objective 2.8 – correct the spacing (remove embedded tabs).
 - Add Objective 3.4 to read: “Utilize all traffic calming techniques and strategies available.”
 - Objective 4.4 – delete “in lieu contributions”.

- Objective 5.5 – rewrite to read: “Utilize Bike-Walk Advisory Committee to recommend projects and pursue funding sources and conduct bike/ped education to encourage safety and visibility.”

Nick Meyer asked about the threshold to mandate improvements to a private road serving multiple families. Robin Pierce suggested adding language to the Land Development Code when the update is done to read: “Any private road that serves more than five (5) units of housing or properties must be built to Village standards when approved or if the application is being modified or if the number of units is being increased.”

6. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

Affordable Housing Work Session with Board of Trustees

It was noted there was an article in the *Seven Days* publication about the residents of Thasha Lane. Nick Meyer suggested before the Planning Commission begins updating the Land Development Code a joint work session should be held with the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees to discuss mandating some affordable units as part of large residential developments in the village.

Next Meeting

May 1 (work session)

- Agenda:
- Land Use
 - Transportation
 - Implementation
 - Top five goals & priorities for the plan
 - Maps
 - Approve minutes (April 3 & 17)

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

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