

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
JOINT MEETING WITH VILLAGE TRUSTEES
MAY 17, 2018
AGENDA
6:30 P.M.**

I. Audience for Visitors

II. Additions or Amendments to Agenda

III. Presentation

- A. Presentation by Regina Mahony, CCRPC, on “The Economics of Development”

IV. Joint Meeting with the Village of Essex Junction Trustees

- A. Discussion about parking, landscaping and other issues.

V. Other Planning Commissions Items

VI. Adjournment

Pursuant to 24 VSA Section 4464(a)(1)(C) Participation during the public hearing before the Essex Junction Planning Commission is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public-To-Be-Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chair, during consideration of a specific agenda item.

Public comments are limited to a three minute rule unless waived by the Planning Commission Chair.

NOTE: The Planning Commission may choose to postpone consideration of any application not started before 10:00 P.M.

This meeting will be held in the conference room of the Essex Junction municipal building at 2 Lincoln St., Essex Jct., VT. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request to the Village, 878-6950, to assure that Village meetings are accessible to all individuals regardless of disability.

For information on subsequent meetings on the above mentioned applications, please contact the Community Development Department from 8 – 4:30 at 878-6950 or the website www.essexjunction.org.

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES & PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT WORK SESSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
May 17, 2018**

TRUSTEES PRESENT: George Tyler (Village President); Andrew Brown, Elaine Sopchak, Dan Kerin, Lori Houghton.

PLANNING COMMISSION: David Nistico (Chair), Diane Clemens, Amber Thibeault, John Alden, Joe Weith. (Steve Shaw and Andrew Boutin were absent.)

ADMINISTRATION: Robin Pierce, Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Greg Duggan, Irene Wrenner, Anne Whyte, Linda McKenna, Paula DiMichele, Greg Moran, Regina Mahony.

1. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Village President, George Tyler, opened the joint work session with the Planning Commission at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA CHANGES/APPROVAL

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. PRESENTATION: The Economics of Development

Regina Mahony, Regional Planning, gave a presentation on the economics of development highlighting the following:

- Regional Planning tracks housing in the region from the perspective of economic development, transportation, regional planning, education, public health.
- The objective is to continue growth where there is existing infrastructure and prevent sprawl (have 80% of growth in the planned growth areas). The goal is to build 700 units per year or 3,000 homes over five years with 20% of that number being affordable housing.
- Spending less than 30% of income on housing is deemed affordable. One third of homeowners spend more than this amount and over half of renters spend more than this amount.
- In 2014, 64% of employees in the county lived in the county. Regional Planning seeks to get the percentage back to 75%.
- Household size is shrinking to less than 2.4 people.
- Vacancy rate between 3% and 5% is healthy for Chittenden County. The national rate has not dropped below 4%. The number of houses built in 2017 is less than the number built prior to that time.
- Construction costs are high in Vermont due to land, labor, materials, heat/cooling, permitting, and contaminated soil costs. The cost of building housing is \$256,000 per unit for a 60 unit project. Building affordable units is difficult to achieve.
- Incentives in support of building affordable housing include a density bonus for the project, easing dimensional standards (setbacks) or parking requirements, having a master plan for the development, having inclusionary zoning in place, establishing a local housing trust fund. Other ideas to help provide affordable

- housing include building on municipally owned land, reducing permit fees, reducing infrastructure costs, having TIF districts, neighborhood development areas which the Village has and that is a good program, and tax stabilization.
- The numbers must work for developers to build.

COMMENTS

Linda McKenna, resident, asked when quality of living or the environment is considered. Regina Mahony said the regulations are clear as to what the community wants and in defining development that fits in the scale and character of the community.

Andrew Brown asked if the incentives for affordable housing are working. Robin Pierce said the village had one proposal that received an extra unit as a bonus. Only one proposal was submitted in the Neighborhood Designation district since its inception in the last year or so, and that included affordable housing.

John Alden said goals on what is wanted for affordable housing should be set and then determine if the incentives that are in place are working. Robin Pierce said there is a decent percentage of affordable housing included in the development proposal on the McEwing lot. Research is showing young professionals want smaller units closer to the downtown area so developers are building smaller units with other amenities in the building. And that they are looking for access rather than ownership, so choose renting over purchase.

Andrew Brown said the average family does not want a studio apartment. Affordable housing is needed for families.

Elaine Sopchak said people need to be made more aware of the opportunities for affordable housing such as the Village Center Designation, tax stabilization, accessory dwelling units. Robin Pierce stated that accessory dwelling units can be approved administratively in the Village making the process less cumbersome and more efficient for applicants.

Regina Mahony said a housing needs assessment can be done for a frame of reference on what exists and what is needed for housing units. Affordable housing for the elderly as well as for young families is needed. Dan Kerin said jobs paying a livable wage are also needed. The permitting process which is onerous is a deterrent to companies. Vermont ranks 5th in startup businesses nationally, but last in retaining them.

Anne Whyte, resident, mentioned the effects of development on a neighborhood as a result of Planning Commission decisions, but there is no clear path to fix problems that result from the development. Ms. Whyte cited the crescent connector road that is supposed to mitigate congestion at Five Corners yet is shown in a proposal for development as more of an access road to the property. Robin Pierce pointed out the plan on the Regional Planning website is the accurate plan for the road. The proposal for development is simply a concept, not an actual plan at this point.

4. WORK SESSION: Discussion of Parking, Landscaping, and Other Issues***Parking***

George Tyler stated there is lack of parking in the Design Five Corners plan. John Alden said the premise of Design Five Corners is as density is increased in the downtown area with more units closer together the cost per unit will come down and be more affordable. The units are located within walking distance of amenities. Design Five Corners is trying to pack in benefits per square foot into a smaller area and still have green space, parks, walkable streets, and development. Parking is an issue that needs to be addressed.

John Alden said based on feedback on what is being developed now adjustments are needed. Dan Kerin said enforcement must be done so streets are safe and people park where allowed.

There was mention Design Five Corners is not in the Land Development Code as yet to guide decisions. Robin Pierce stated that a grant was received to meld the design Five Corners concept into the Municipal Plan and that consultants are starting the process. The consultants will come before the PC and Trustees during the process. The village Municipal Plan is a guide for developers to see how the village wants to develop. Village staff tries to work with developers to meet the guidance in the Municipal Plan and design Five Corners.

The Village needs to figure out a direction and do a better job of educating the public on this direction. If the municipality values green space then the municipality should create that green space and what is wanted for green space needs to be defined (i.e. a patch of lawn or a park).

Andrew Brown asked if the village is committing to doing Design Five Corners if the plan is in the comprehensive plan. David Nistico pointed out there is a cost to parking, parks, and amenities. Joe Weith said the actual parking and housing situation in the village is not known. Nor does the village know what is wanted. A parking committee and housing committee should be formed and charged with collecting data in the village and town on housing and parking. The committee should draft goals, objectives, and an action plan. Dave Nistico said there should be a timeline to complete the deliverables.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

The Planning Commission will look at making it easier for residents to have accessory dwellings as affordable housing. The regulations need to be clear and doable. Portions of the Land Development Code can be posted on the village website to help better inform the public.

6. ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion and without objection the work session concluded at 8:30 PM.