

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
May 6, 2021**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** David Nistico, Chair; John Alden, Vice Chair; Diane Clemens; Phil Batalion; Patrick Scheld; Steven Shaw. (Andrew Boutin was absent)

**ADMINISTRATION:** Robin Pierce, Community Development Director; Regina Mahony, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission;

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Deb McAdoo;

- AGENDA:**
1. Call to Order/Audience for Visitors
  2. Additions/Amendments to the Agenda
  3. Minutes – April 1, 2021
  4. Work Session – Continue updates for Land Development Code
    - a. Discussion on Design Five Corners and design review amendments
  5. Other Planning Commission Items
  6. Adjournment
- 

**1. CALL TO ORDER/AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS**

David Nistico called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

**2. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA**

None at this time.

**3. MINUTES**

*April 1, 2021-*

**MOTION by Diane Clemens, SECOND by Phil Batalion, to approve the minutes as presented. VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carried.**

**4. WORK SESSION: CONTINUE UPDATES FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE**

A. Discussion on Design Five Corners and design review amendments

Ms. Mahony said that this discussion will focus on design review in the Village Center, potential clarifications and modifications to the approval process, the standards included in the overlay, such as buffer zones and height, and finally where the overlay should be located geographically.

Ms. Mahony began by reviewing Chapter 6. She suggested that 6(2)(b) be deleted to provide clarification around which processes are used and when. The Planning Commission agreed and Ms. Mahony will strike the requirement while ensuring that flexibility remains to allow PUDs.

Ms. Mahony then discussed the height standard, which attempts to keep some proportionality as new buildings are erected and existing shorter buildings are adjacent.

She suggested a blanket requirement of 4 stories maximum. Ms. Clemens agreed, saying that it would allow for growth in the densest and most vibrant part of the Village, while other requirements in the LDC will still reflect the desired aesthetics in the VC District. Ms. Mahony will strike the existing language and replace it with a requirement for a 4-story maximum height for buildings.

Ms. Mahony then reviewed Section 620, which is the Design Review Overlay District. She noted that it is based on the exact review overlay in the VC District. She noted that it extends on Pearl Street out to the West Street extension and asked if that is the correct placement. Ms. Clemens agreed and suggested that it also extend 2 to 3 block from 5 Corners on Maple Street and include all of Park Street down to the bridge, on Lincoln Street to the intersection of North Street and Grove Street (not including the St. James driveway), and then Main Street down to Pleasant Street. Mr. Alden suggested extending it to 81 Main Street. Mr. Scheld asked how the Crescent Connector and blocking off Main Street at 5 Corners would change traffic patterns and whether this overlay would capture that. Mr. Nistico replied that traffic studies will be completed for the projects as they begin. Ms. Mahony asked if adding the overlay district would add historic requirements to homes. Mr. Alden replied that if the requirements are changed, a lot of homeowners will be coming to the Commission with change requests. He suggested rewriting the design review piece to be less invasive if the district is extended, and that the requirements for historic downtown properties shouldn't all be applied to the trunk roads or streets for the overlay district. Mr. Nistico said that the overlay district seems to have a graduated set of requirements the further one gets from the VC District. Mr. Alden asked staff to determine where the cutoff point for the overlay is on each of the five arteries leading to the center of the Village.

Ms. Mahony then discussed Design Standards for the Village Center. She asked whether the Planning Commission is comfortable with the setback requirements as they are, or whether they should be adjusted. Mr. Nistico suggested gradually increasing the setback the further one gets from the Village center. Ms. Mahony asked about formula-based retail and restaurants, and whether those requirements should be included in the overlay district. She asked if these requirements should be applied to the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) district in its entirety or for new development. The Planning Commission agreed that the requirements should be applied to new development in the TOD and on the trunk roads.

Ms. Mahony then discussed encouraging older homes to become more multi-family residential units. Mr. Pierce noted that it will be important to let people know that it's possible to have an accessory dwelling unit or additional apartment. Mr. Scheld said that as long as streetscapes and viewscales remain intact, the Village could allow for a second or third interior apartment to be constructed, and that any exterior impacts maintain the historic character of the Village. Ms. Mahony said that the code needs to be written to specify that the property-owner can live either in the primary property or the accessory dwelling unit and that statute actually doesn't require the property to be owner-occupied at all. Mr. Scheld asked if it would be possible to set limits on how many properties

someone who has multi-unit properties owns, to avoid having developers or companies own large swathes of houses and properties. Ms. Mahony replied that a requirement like that may not be possible through zoning, but potentially through ordinance.

Regina will have recommendation for each of the trunk routes and how much of the overlay will come into play there. She asked that Commission members email her ideas around what level of review makes sense for each of the trunk roads and areas.

#### **5. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS**

Mr. Scheld noted that there is a small workgroup developing proposals for inclusionary zoning. He said he would have more of an update at the following Planning Commission meeting.

#### **6. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Patrick Scheld, to adjourn the meeting.**

**VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 PM.

*RScty: AACoonradt*