

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 3, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Alden, Chair; Phil Batalion; Diane Clemens. (Andrew Boutin and Patrick Scheld were absent)

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Christopher Kline, Michael Thorne.

- AGENDA:**
1. Call to Order/Audience for Visitors
 2. Additions/Amendments to the Agenda
 3. Minutes – January 6, 2022
 4. Work Session
 - A. Continue updates for the Land Development Code
 5. Other Planning Commission items
 6. Adjournment

1. CALL TO ORDER/AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

John Alden called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

2. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

None at this time.

3. MINUTES

January 6, 2022-

No vote was taken due to lack of quorum.

4. ELECT VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Postponed due to lack of quorum.

5. WORK SESSION

A. Continue updates for the Land Development Code

Ms. Mahony began with a discussion of residential density. She noted thresholds used in the State for various designation programs, which include 4 units per acre (minimum threshold) for Growth Center and Neighborhood Development Area designations (which aligns with the Village's designations) and 8 units per acre for single family residential in those designations. The thresholds also include 7 units per acre as the minimum density to support transit with a frequency of 1 bus every 30 minutes. She then compared Essex Junction's zoning districts to the criteria, noting that they all meet it except for elements of Residential Office, Residential 1 (R1), and Residential 2 (R2). She said that those base thresholds can be achieved through the density bonus provisions in the current LDC.

Ms. Clemens noted that most lots are smaller than 1 acre, except for in older areas. She asked about how the density thresholds could interact with those larger lots in the Village. Ms. Mahony replied that the

lots can be subdivided, and new development would likely seek the Planned Unit Development (PUD) route for approval to achieve more density.

Mr. Batalion asked if multi-family lots are allowed in R1 and R2. Mr. Mahony replied yes, but only through the PUD process. Mr. Batalion noted that single-family zoning has greatly exacerbated the housing crisis, and he would like to look at how to create in-fill or allow more density.

Ms. Clemens asked if regulations could be modified to allow for two Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) per lot instead of one. She said that that could be one way to encourage density while ensuring that neighborhoods continue to look residential. Ms. Mahony replied that that municipalities can be more permissive than the current ADU regulation.

Mr. Alden spoke about infill as a tool to increase density, noting that Essex Junction had had more infill about ten years prior and that it had a large impact on the neighborhoods. He said that infill is difficult for the Planning Commission to regulate and maintain the character of a neighborhood.

Mr. Pierce said maybe the Planning Commission should recommend allowing additional stories on buildings, which would allow for greater density. Ms. Clemens suggested gradually phasing some of this in. Mr. Pierce pointed out that enabling more units would allow people to put them in, but wouldn't necessarily mean that everyone would do it. He said that additional units in an apartment building would guarantee increased density.

Mr. Batalion suggested allowing duplexes further out from the Village Center, such as in the R2 district. Ms. Clemens said it would be good to encourage more ADUs in the R1 district, as well.

Mr. Alden summarized the discussion, noting general support from the Planning Commission for duplexes in the R1 and R2 districts, as well as interest in exploring the possibility of allowing additional ADUs in more detail. He said that the Planning Commission in general is in favor of being more permissive in terms of density and is not interested in changing minimum lot sizes.

Ms. Mahony then went on to discuss bicycle parking. She summarized the LDC requirements, which pertain to properties with more than 15 parking spaces. She said that the Planning Commission could consider more multimodal improvements. She pointed out that Essex Junction has a good bike path in the Town Plan, and could add strengthening language to support it. She suggested considering adding long-term bicycle parking for residents of multi-family buildings, considering adjustments to commercial visitor bicycle parking requirements, and considering standards beyond the number of bike parking spaces that are required. Mr. Batalion asked how bicycle parking is defined. Ms. Mahony replied that generally it's defined as a rack with two points of locking for bicycles. Ms. Clemens suggested looking at South Burlington's regulations as a reference point.

Ms. Mahony then briefly spoke about Planned Unit Development (PUD) regulations. She provided suggestions for improvements to the language, such as clarifying the purpose and objective statements to more clearly state that good design will lead to waivers (not the other way around), possibly requiring a preliminary review after the conceptual/sketch plan stage (at the Planning Commission's discretion), and tightening up landscaping language to require a plan developed by a Vermont-licensed landscape

architect. She asked whether PUDs are used mostly in the R1 and R2 districts, or in other districts too. Ms. Clemens replied that many of the PUDs have been on Pearl Street rather than in the TOD.

Mr. Alden said that the Planning Commission should review Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 for next month's meeting, which reflect some of tonight's discussion points.

6. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

None at this time.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Diane Clemens, SECOND by Phil Batalion, to adjourn the meeting. VOTING: unanimous (3-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 PM.

RScty: AACoonradt