

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
NOVEMBER 10, 2022  
DRAFT**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Phil Batalion, Chair; Patrick Scheld, Vice Chair; Diane Clemens; Scott McCormick; Elijah Massey.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Regina Mahony, City Manager.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** None.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Phil Batalion called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

**3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

No comments.

**4. MINUTES**

a. **October 6, 2022**

**MOTION by DIANE CLEMENS, SECOND by ELIJAH MASSEY, to approve the minutes of October 6, 2022 as amended. VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carries.**

**The following amendments were made:**

- Page 2: last paragraph - replace “Adaption” with “Adaptation”

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. **Continued discussion of future agenda topics and prioritization**

Commissioner Batalion clarified his statements from the previous Planning Commission meeting around potential development of Stevens Park. He said that his intention was around improvements and creating a better park and green space for the public, not developing the park in the traditional sense of development.

Commissioner Clemens suggested topics around Design Five Corners, the Comprehensive Plan, annual report and budget, and City ordinances, since they impact the Planning Commission. She said that in terms of the Comprehensive Plan, it would be helpful to know how many home occupations the City has, to determine whether it is expanding and where it is growing. She asked whether the Essex Junction Recreation/Park Master Plan from 2007 needs to be updated. She also asked whether they can obtain a GIS map of where all the businesses in Essex Junction are located.

Commissioner McCormick suggested adding topics around a business development strategy and figuring out the future business climate. He suggested talking to private businesses and the Economic Development Committee.

The Planning Commission discussed the criteria that will be used to prioritize the future agenda topics that were put forth during its brainstorming sessions. Commissioner McCormick reviewed the initial, proposed list of criteria. These included:

- The potential for significant and lasting impact: Commissioner Batalion expressed support for this criterion, noting that each topic could have impacts for different populations, communities, and areas. Commissioner Clemens suggested looking at short-, medium-, and long-term impacts.
- Whether the topic meets Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives: The Planning Commission decided to remove this criterion, given that any topic should meet the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- How much City Council and/or community stakeholder support the topic has: The Planning Commission decided to remove this criterion, as it would be difficult to objectively determine how much support from the City Council or community stakeholders a topic would have prior to discussing the topic.
- The extent of institutional capacity built and/or stakeholder engagement during implementation
- Whether the topic catalyzes impact in other areas/goals/objectives/strategies
- Whether the topic is realistic and feasible to implement within 5 years (which is the remaining timeframe for the current Comprehensive Plan): Commissioner Batalion also suggested a criterion that focuses on more long-term implementation and impacts.
- Whether the topic produces quick impacts
- Whether the topic is a “bankable” activity (it can be developed into a fundable project or activity).

Commissioner Batalion suggested a criterion related to whether the topic falls under the purview of the Planning Commission. Commissioner McCormick agreed that this is a good criterion and said that it will also be important to determine whether there is staff capacity to implement actionable items related to the topic. He additionally noted that another good criterion is political will, and whether there is political support for a topic.

Commissioner McCormick suggested folding a number of the topics into an item around developing a climate change action strategy, since a number of the brainstormed items have to do with transportation and energy.

Commissioner Scheld spoke about maintaining momentum around Design Five Corners and the Crescent Connector, especially as the City searches for a new Community Development Director. He asked what role the Planning Commission can play to help maintain momentum until that position is filled. The Planning Commission noted that the Design Five Corners project dovetails with topics around housing and economic/business development. Commissioner Massey suggested adding a topic within the Design Five Corners bucket around public art, which would improve the appearance of the community and potentially help to attract developers and businesses. Commissioner Scheld suggested a topic around addressing vacant commercial spaces and how to attract businesses to them.

After further discussion of the topics and the prioritization criteria, the Planning Commission decided on four broad priority topics: housing, design five corners, supporting businesses and climate action plan/strategy. The Planning Commission further decided to focus on one topic at a time and to start with housing.

The Planning Commission discussed the housing-related topics further. City Manager Mahony noted that the Housing Commission has been discussing inclusionary zoning and a housing trust fund. She noted that the Commission submitted a proposal to the Town Selectboard around a housing trust fund this past Monday evening and will be submitting it to the City Council in December. She said that in terms of interactions between the Planning Commission and Housing Commission, one topic that might be useful to discuss are the proposed Land Development Code (LDC) amendments related to duplexes and triplexes in the Residential 1 and 2 zoning districts. Commissioner Scheld noted that an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Plan is being developed at the State level and that they will select five communities across the State to be pilot communities. Commissioner Batalion suggested sending the Housing Commission the list of topics that the Planning Commission has developed around housing (which include a rental ordinance and registry, data collection around permits, inclusionary zoning, the housing needs assessment, and ADUs) and asking for feedback and their prioritization of these items. City Manager Mahony said it would be valuable for the Planning Commission to engage with the Housing Commission on these topics and determine how they can best work collaboratively. She said that she will invite the Housing Commission chair to attend the Planning Commission's December meeting to provide an update on inclusionary zoning and the housing trust fund proposal.

City Manager Mahony walked the Planning Commission through a number of online resources related to housing in Vermont. These include the Building Homes Together Dashboard on the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)'s website, which provides various statistics on housing in Chittenden County, and HousingData.org, which also shows data points related to housing and housing affordability in Vermont by municipality.

Commissioner Scheld spoke briefly about information he gathered related to obtaining Downtown designation. He said that based on what he learned, there is not much additional benefit the City would obtain from moving to a Downtown designation. He noted that moving to such a designation would require a non-profit organization to govern the Downtown designation (which would need to be funded by the City), and that the City's existing designation provides comparable benefits already (Act 250 exemption for certain priority housing, tax credits, etc).

City Manager Mahony provided more general City updates to the Planning Commission. She spoke about the status of the Land Development Code updates, noting that the City Council may want more information on the addition of duplexes and triplexes as allowable in the Residential 1 and 2 zoning districts, as well as obtaining more public input on those changes. She noted that the City has one year from the Planning Commission's public hearing (which was in August) to act on the Land Development Code updates. She also spoke about the City Council's desire to engage in a larger strategic visioning process for the City, which they would like to conduct in the spring. She said that the Planning Commission's work will be valuable in informing that process.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION by PATRICK SCHELD , SECOND by SCOTT McCORMICK, to adjourn the meeting.  
VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carries.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 P.M.

*RScty: AACoonradt*