Village of Old Bennington

Minutes of the Planning Commission

Special Meeting

November 11, 2024

*zoom recording link attached below*

***DRAFT COPY***

November 11, 2024

Members Present: Galen Jones (Chair), Renny Ponvert, Brian Scheetz

Members Absent: Chris Ponesi, Carl Feltz

Others Present: David Kiernan (Zoning Administrator),

1. **Call to Order:** 7:12PM
2. **Changes to Agenda:** Add update 6 Seminary Lane application
3. Approval of Minutes November 7, 2024. Motion to approve by Mr Ponvert, seconded by Mr. Scheetz. Motion passed 3-0-0.
4. **Citizen comments not related to Agenda:** None
5. **Town Plan Revisions** Mr. Jones opened discussion by detailing reservations voiced by the Village Trustees regarding the PC beginning work on the new Town Plan, specifically the community engagement section and the suggestion that a consultant be hired before grant funding is available. Mr. Jones asked the ZA if he was familiar with any private consultants in other Towns he has worked in. Mr. Kiernan stated that for development of the Town Plan only BCRC had been used as a consultant.

(*Due to recording error ZOOM begins at this point approx. 2 minutes into discussion)*

Mr. Jonesreviewed the information from BCRC regarding the timing of any

grant award. If awarded the Municipal Planning Grant funding would not be

available till late spring and there is no guarantee that the Village will receive the

grant. No reimbursable work can be conducted until after the grant is awarded.

The PC had recommended to the Trustees that the PC conduct the community

outreach and survey requirements of a new Town Plan.

Mr. Jones stated “one of the reasons we wanted to go down the route we decided to go down was to get the process moving”. Mr. Jones reported that the Chair of the Trustees questioned at the last Trustee meeting if the PC members would have the time or bandwidth to do that.

Mr. Scheetz questioned whether the PC could do the rest of the plan if the grant

wasn’t awarded. Mr. Jones stated that the last Town Plan was done without any

grant and only minimal statutorily required assistance form BCRC. Mr. Jones

stated that the new plan could be done without the grant. The advantage of

having the grant would be to make it easier to get some of the information from

BCRC that we would try to get from them anyway. Other advantages of using

the grant is having someone to put the document together and importantly to

develop the enhanced energy plan.

Mr. Jones stated that the “focus right now just on this immediate piece”,

referring to the community outreach portion of the town plan development

process.

Mr. Ponvert expressed that it was his understanding that the Trustees urgency

was to “get the process started right away and we want this thing sooner than

later and that’s why we should hire BCRC”. Mr. Ponvert reviewed that if BCRC

was given the whole task to do than nothing could be done until May or June

when the grant may be awarded. If the PC does the work itself it could start

next week. If an outside consultant is hired for the resident input portion Mr.

Ponvert states that if the Trustees want the PC to start right now it is going to

have to come out of the Village residents tax pockets.

Mr. Scheetz states we don’t even know what a consultant would cost. Mr. Jones

stated “we don’t have either a budget from Trustees or estimates from

consultants”. BCRC also needs to be instructed to file for the grant on behalf of

the Village sooner than later. Janet from BCRC indicated that the grant

application could be with or without the community engagement section. The

PC plan to complete that section of the plan would have to be detailed in the

application.

Mr. Ponvert suggested that a budget for a consultant be requested of the

Trustees at their next meeting. If a consultant can be found for the budgeted

amount than one could be contracted. If not the PC could do it. Mr. Ponvert

sees no need for a consultant on the community engagement part of the plan

and sees no conflict of interest in the PC conducting the survey and community

meetings.

Mr. Scheetz stated that “he had no doubt we could do a better job of community

engagement then either than BCRC or a consultant”. His only concern is

making sure the quality of the community engagement meets the standards to

get the overall plan approved.

Mr. Jones will contact Janet at BCRC for update on application date and

confirm submission without community engagement. It will require PC to

develop plan to conduct the engagement to submit along with grant application.

Mr. Jones will also address Trustees on amount of funding available for

expenditure pre-grant award and continue to address Trustee concerns about

PC starting the community engagement process.

1. **Rental Registry Proposals** Mr Ponvert presented the latest draft of the Short Term Rental & Registry Ordinance. Minor changes were made to the Ordinance as presented, Discussion then turned to what was requested from the PC by the Trustees. During discussion it was proposed to drop section 5 which contained regulations on operation of a STR and focus document on registry.

Motion by Mr. Ponvert to send Short Term Rental Registry Ordinance to Trustees for review with section 5 deleted, add into section 2.4 Village Safety Officer and have Trustees define and assign. Correct minor grammatical and typographical errors corrected. Seconded by Mr. Scheetz. Motion passed 3-0-0.

1. **New Information on 6 Seminary Lane Application**

Applicant submitted new plans developed by architect for his patio enclosure. Review by the PC will require warning of new public hearing which will take place on December 19 2024. Mr. Jones expressed concern about allowing an expansion of a building that was issued a permit based on the condition that a principal dwelling be built. No such dwelling exists or is currently planned. Mr. Jones is concerned with setting precedent that can affect future applications. Mr. Jones will consult with Village Attorney.

1. **Next Meeting:** December 19, 2024 at 7PM
2. **Adjournment** Motion to Adjourn at 2034hrs by Mr. Scheetz, seconded by Mr. Ponvert. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Here is a link to the Zoom recording of the meeting:**

<https://zoom.us/rec/share/YOxiP-3UB1OobiAsbDW1PZ3AH3mxo_L4B1DYUsZO-2WiXyiPIbUC45k2gMJyG_jH.dB24JGNCbB6hqmAn>

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