

Town of Barre
Planning Commission
December 21, 2022

The Town of Barre Planning Commission held a meeting on Wednesday, December 21, 2022 beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building at 149 Websterville Road, Websterville, VT.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

In person: Cedric Sanborn, Chris Violette, George Clain, Terry Reil, Byron Atwood, Craig Chase and Mike Gilbar

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

In person: Chris Violette

OTHERS PRESENT

Remote: Francis “Topper” McFaun and Gina Galfetti (House of Representatives)

A. CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Sanborn called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

B. CHANGES TO THE PUBLISHED AGENDA?

Mr. Clain mentioned he would like to discuss City Centers. Mr. Sanborn suggested that the subject be put on a future agenda.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 1) November 16, 2022

On motion by Mr. Gilbar seconded by Mr. Reil, the Planning Commission approved the minutes of November 16, 2022 as written. Vote 6-0-1 (Chase abstained)

D. NON-AGENDA ITEMS (PUBLIC COMMENT) - NONE

E. NEW BUSINESS

- 1) Receive guest: Topper McFaun and Gina Galfetti (Barre Town’s Representatives) to discuss proposed legislation that significantly alters enabling zoning laws which will limit municipalities existing authority to regulate (via zoning) residential uses.

The Planning Commission members discussed the bill in committed pertaining to amending 24 VSA § 4414, which will sufficiently impact the existing zoning bylaws on housing.

Mr. Violette provided an overview of the proposed amendments to 24 VSA §4414 and the impact and reduction to municipalities’ authority to regulate housing. Highlights of proposed changes will impact:

- Limit authority that require more than one space per dwelling unit

- Eliminates using “character of the area” as a criterion for conditional use review
- Eliminates control over where duplexes can go
- Prohibits restricts of allowing less than five dwellings unit per acre*
- Prohibits minimum lot size 1/5 acre*
- Restrict limits on heights of municipal-family dwellings or mixed development
*if connected to municipal sewer and water.

Discussion ensued amongst members to the House representatives expressing concerns that the proposed bill is taking a problematic housing shortage in larger communities, by mandating it across the state and not reviewing the ramifications of the impact on smaller communities; taking away the local municipal control to regulate housing in its zoned areas; putting housing in rural areas where there aren't municipal services water or sewer or public transportation.

The House representatives provided an overview of the legislative protocol and ensured that the PC members' voice is heard regarding the proposed bill to the State Housing Committee.

- 2) Discuss the Public Service Department's Public Engagement Plan regarding Vermont's renewable and clean electricity policies and programs.

Mr. Gilbar provided an overview of his comments for Vermont's renewable and clean electricity policies and programs. He stated there is a delay in outreach for education and public feedback to the proposed policies and programs.

Discussion ensued among members regarding green energy and probability of the State taxing energy to replace the decline in gas tax revenue.

F. OLD BUSINESS

- 1) Review the Enhanced Energy Plan and continue discussion regarding forming an Energy Committee (if time allows)

Energy Committee (forming)

Members discussed forming an Energy Committee which would be an advisory committee under the Selectboard's direction. Discussion ensued regarding the type of tasks, charge, goals with focus on the municipal properties, outreach to the community on weatherization and other resources for renewable energy, energy efficiency and reducing carbon footprint.

Enhanced Energy Plan

Mr. Gilbar stated the Energy Plan needs to be update and suggest reviewing it for edits at the next meeting.

G. FOLLOW-UP

- 1) Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission report

Mr. Violette provided an overview of CVRPC's review of the Lowery Road Solar project.

Discussion ensued concerning the lines be buried connecting the solar array to the grid.

H. ROUND TABLE - NONE

I. ADJOURN

On motion by Mr. Clain, seconded by Mr. Gilbar, the Planning Commission adjourned at 9:02 p.m. Vote 7-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Spaulding, Clerk

Cedric Sanborn, Chair

Mike Gilbar

George Clain

Byron Atwood

Chris Violette

Craig Chase

Terry Reil

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