

Sutton Planning Commission Hearing  
Minutes of meeting 3-27-2018  
Location: Sutton Town Offices

In attendance: Paul Brouha (chair), Hank Parker, Brandon Mazur (clerk), Lucien Belanger, Byron Savoy, Darlene Ahrens (Sutton Planning Commission), Joe Witt (Zoning Administrator), (by phone), Jacob Fortin, Matt Seaver (News 7), Ramona Nault, Rob Darling

Brandon read the draft minutes of the joint Selectboard/Planning Commission meeting on 2-22-18. The minutes were accepted as written and read.

Next, Brandon read the warning published in the *Caledonian-Record* on March 12, 2018:

Town of Sutton

Notice of Hearing, March 27, 2018 @ 6:00 pm  
Sutton Town Office @ [167 Underpass Road](#) in Sutton, VT

Planning Commission hearing on technical amendments to certain sections of the Universal Development Bylaws as follows:

Section 205, Scenic District—add Campground as Conditional Use.

Section 205, Working Lands District—add intent to foster natural resource-based economic development in keeping with current agricultural/rural landscape and clarify lot density standard.

Section 701.03, Applicability of Subdivision Review—add section to provide for small boundary adjustments between two adjacent parcels.

Section 905, Public Notice—add responsibility to post notices to Zoning Administrator duties and require written notification to all property owners within one quarter mile distance.

These changes affect either the district in which they are proposed or the entire Town of Sutton. The full text of proposed amendments may be examined at the Town Office.

Paul explained to all present that the purpose of this legislative hearing is to consider public comments/concerns regarding proposed Universal Development Bylaws Amendments.

Byron asked about the size of signs in Sutton relative to the school's proposed sign. Paul explained to Byron how the decision to shrink the sign to meet the existing zoning bylaw standard was arrived at—therefore no amendment of that standard is proposed.

**Section 205, Scenic District—add Campground as Conditional Use**

Paul explained that the omission of campgrounds as a conditional use in the Scenic District was an oversight. He read the definition of a campground. He explained potential new campgrounds would have to be created under Act 250. There were no questions or discussion.

**Section 205, Working Lands District—add intent to foster natural resource-based economic development in keeping with current agricultural/rural landscape and clarify lot density standard**

Paul read the additions and explained the intent and circumstances behind their creation. There were no questions or discussion.

**Section 701.03, Applicability of Subdivision Review—add section to provide for small boundary adjustments between two adjacent parcels**

Paul read the additions and explained the intent and circumstances behind their creation. There were no questions or discussion.

**Section 905, Public Notice—add responsibility to post notices to Zoning Administrator duties and require written notification to all property owners within one quarter mile distance**

Joe Witt explained that because he spends much of his time in Randolph, VT he makes trips to Sutton just to handle his ZA duties. Adding the obligation for the ZA to post notices would increase the number of trips he makes. Darlene stated that continuing to have applicants post notices might again lead to situations where an applicant tries to “sneak” a change/addition by their neighbors. There was general agreement the Assistant ZA or a member of the Planning Commission could post notices to avoid Joe having to make a special trip to the site and it was suggested he could post the notice while making his first site inspection so neighbors would be informed as early as possible.

Paul stated that surrounding jurisdictions with zoning bylaws have ZAs post notices (signs with red Ps).

There were no final questions or comments about the draft amendments from members or the public and Paul closed the hearing at 6:20 pm.

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The meeting convened at 6:20 pm.

In attendance: Paul Brouha (chair), Hank Parker, Brandon Mazur (clerk), Lucien Belanger, Byron Savoy, Darlene Ahrens (Sutton Planning Commission), Joe Witt (Zoning Administrator), (by phone), Jacob Fortin, Matt Seaver (News 7).

Paul entertained a motion to approve the draft bylaw amendments as written and to forward them to the Selectboard for their consideration and a public hearing at their earliest convenience. Paul read a draft of a letter to the Selectboard explaining the intent of the draft amendments and the circumstances behind their creation. Darlene moved to accept. Lucien seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting then moved on to old business. Paul reviewed existing and potential tasks before the Planning Commission. Existing tasks included launching the Sutton Energy Committee and updating the Town Plan. Potential tasks included assisting with development of a town speed ordinance, developing a conflict of interest policy, determining next steps/options concerning moving/renovating the Grange Hall/creating an ADA-accessible community meeting space, and other tasks the Selectboard might assign. There was general agreement the Energy Committee Charter needs to be acted upon. The Selectboard has encouraged Clint Gray to draft a Sutton Speed Ordinance (including upgrading signage). Through the passage of Act 79 in the 2017 session, the VT state legislature is requiring all towns to adopt a conflict of interest prohibition by July 1, 2019.

The meeting then moved on to discussing why the non-binding bonding article to move/rehabilitate the Grange Hall had not passed at Town Meeting. Hank was given the floor. He stated that perhaps the major reason the Grange Hall article was not adopted was the Planning Commission had not given the public enough detailed information ahead of time. Byron and Darlene agreed. Hank stated his belief that a community space is something the town does not currently have and is a resource that would increase quality of life. Byron stated that the Grange Hall is not significant in any way architecturally, is potentially covered in lead paint and has a ceiling of Homasote fiber board. Hank stated that the vision for this community center needs to come from the Planning Commission. Paul added that any vision has to be a vision of the town, including the Selectboard. Hank agreed, and said that someone has to start, and our first step should be to gain Selectboard approval followed by forming a community group to discover and define costs. Joe Witt stated that he disagreed with Byron's assessment of the building and that moving it was a good plan. He reminded the Planning Commission that the idea to move/renovate the building came from the Selectboard. His assessment was that the voters were concerned about their taxes going up. Joe also reminded us that the estimates he received were for summer 2018, and any future numbers would likely increase. Darlene pointed out that the Town Meeting attendees had some questions that couldn't be answered. Lucien reminded us that members of the community have also asked how long Sutton School will continue to operate and, should the school close, the town would suddenly have a large building to find a use for. Hank presented a proposed approach to the Sutton Grange Hall renovation project. Brandon stated that the town of Sutton had 13 deaths and 7 births in 2017 and that isn't the direction we want our population going, that the school is facing closing, and that Ben Doyle, Community and Economic Development Director of USDA Rural Development, stated that towns in Vermont which are not losing their population have community centers. Brandon presented some potential avenues of funding he recently learned about at a funders' workshop. Hank shared a project brochure published by Wayne, Maine detailing their Masonic Hall Renovation.

Lucien had to leave the meeting at 7:00, as did Joe Witt.

Byron moved to adjourn. Darlene seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm.

These minutes prepared by Brandon Mazur