

Sutton Planning Commission
Minutes of special meeting May 11, 2015
Sutton Town Offices

In attendance: Paul Brouha, Hank Parker, Byron Savoy, Brandon Mazur, Alison Low (NVDA)

Brandon read the Sutton Planning Commission minutes from the meeting on March 23, 2015. No corrections or additions were suggested. Paul moved to approve; Byron seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Brandon read the Sutton Planning Commission minutes from the meeting on April 27, 2015. No corrections or additions were suggested. Paul moved to approve; Hank seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

The purpose of this special meeting was to present draft unified development bylaws and zoning maps and then discuss and take actions as appropriate.

Hank inquired about the difference between the terms "Working Lands Overlay" and "Working Lands District" as both are used in the regulations, which Alison clarified. Paul expressed his desire to integrate a junk/"tired iron" ordinance into the Bylaws due to a rise of disabled vehicles on front lawns. Alison suggested the Planning Commission examine State regulations. Paul then advanced a desire to create criteria (or an "energy plan") that would guide the citing of industrial-scale, grid-connected renewable energy projects to appropriate areas in Sutton, Alison noted that such guidance would first need to go in the Town Plan before enforcement provisions could be included in the Bylaws.

Alison then led a walk through of the draft. The following changes were suggested and points of concern raised:

Hank suggested that the first time a defined word appears in the document that it be italicized or made distinct in some other way.

Village District: Paul noted that one of the constants throughout the focus groups was the desire that the character of the Village District be defined and maintained. He suggested defining terms and expanding the Purpose Statement to provide more comprehensive/clearer guidance.

Hank expressed desire for some more stringent language concerning logging/forestry in the Village District. Byron disagreed, arguing logging is a traditional activity in Northern Vermont and any curtailing of it could be detrimental to residents who have forestland within the Village boundaries. Hank clarified that his chief concern was truck traffic, noise, and the safety of schoolchildren and Village District residents. Paul suggested "silviculture" be added

to “forestry” and that it be a conditional use to differentiate such activity from large-scale logging.

Industrial District: Hank asked why uses such as a lodging house, public facility, or forms of outdoor recreation were not included. Alison noted that a “public facility” is usually for the delivery of services as opposed to commercial uses. It was agreed lodging houses will be added as a permitted use. Further, setbacks from side lot lines and rear lot lines will be changed from 10 feet to 25 feet.

Residential District: Paul proposed that language be added to the Residential District’s Purpose Statement to better define “compatible uses” and to prevent uses (i.e. the accumulation of derelict vehicles and trash visible from the road) that diminish surrounding property values. He noted that at present only uses compatible with residential development are permitted. Hank asked if a legally defined term “public nuisance” exists that could be used. Everyone agreed that junk cars polluting the environment by leaking fluids should be prohibited. Byron objected to establishing restrictive language that would infringe on anyone’s pursuit of happiness for the sake of cosmetics or a silent majority’s perceived standards.

Hank updated the PC about his conversation with Bethel, VT’s renovation of their town hall. Hank learned from Abby Sherman that the town did much work to encourage buy-in from residents to ensure the successful completion of the project. Hank suggested a visit to Bethel. Hank also reported Ms. Sherman had suggested we contact Orange, VT, who recently completed a similar project.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56.

These minutes prepared by Brandon Mazur, Secretary.
Approved June 22, 2015