

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of October 16, 2017

Meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM by Chair Hill-Eubanks.

- I. **Roll Call:** Present for the meeting were Hill-Eubanks, Rhodes, Ruttenberg, and Supplee.
- II. **Set/Adjust Agenda:**
- III. **Public Participation:** None
- IV. **Approval of Minutes:** August 2, 2017; August 21, 2017, September 18, 2017. Rhodes moved to approve. Tabled.
- V. **Review and report on amended draft Northfield zoning bylaws:**
Commissioners reviewed the process for reporting on the draft amended zoning bylaws as described in statute, and discussed the process that has taken place thus far regarding the bylaw amendments.

The Planning Commission revised the bylaws and issued a draft of those revisions in 2016. Several changes in those bylaws were subsequently requested by the Development Review Board. The revised bylaws, along with the requested changes, were approved by the Select Board at its May 23, 2017 hearing, after having put out a draft of the bylaws for public review. Additional changes in the bylaws were also requested by the Select Board at the May 23rd hearing.

Hill-Eubanks explained that once the Select Board requests the changes, the PC does not approve or reject the changes, but must report on them, and also has the option of making recommendations. After the Planning Commission submits its report, the Select Board then holds a hearing and approves or rejects the changes to the bylaws.

Supplee explained the issues with removing the size limit on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). It could have negative impacts in areas like the Falls where a septic system may fail due to the larger sized ADU, and the smaller lots there could prevent the installation of an adequate new septic system. This could impact the Dog River, the habitability of housing, and the tax base. The Falls should have a public sewer system in place before higher density development is encouraged. Supplee has written a memorandum to explain the concerns. The Commissioners agreed to include the concerns in its report to the Select Board and to recommend that the Select Board not remove the ADU size limit from the zoning bylaws.

The draft revisions to the bylaws that were put out for public review did not include the requested change in the coverage of a lot by buildings to a maximum of 50% in the Industrial District, Village Center, and Mixed Use district. The Development Review Board had submitted a draft of the bylaws with this change included in its request for

revisions. The Select Board seems to have approved that draft but an administrative error may have been made in not adding this to the revised version of the bylaws put out for public review. Motion by Rhodes to approve the addition of a note to the report explaining that the 50% maximum size limit was omitted from the draft bylaw revisions; seconded by Ruttenberg. Motion carried 4-0-0.

Commissioners agreed to adopt the memo prepared by Supplee on the ADU issue. The PC will add to its report an explanation that, while it supports economic development in the town, it recommends that higher density development not be encouraged in an area that does not have adequate sewer in place. Ruttenberg moved to add the PC recommendation on the ADU to the report and to adopt the memorandum as part of the report; seconded by Rhodes. Motion carried 4-0-0.

On the issue of the increase in size limit of overhanging signs from 4 sq. ft., to 6 ft. on a side (for Home Occupations), the Commission notes that the wording to explain the size limit is unclear and it is difficult to determine what the actual limit is (per side, or in total area). The meaning in this section should be clarified. It will be so noted in the report.

The Commissioners agree that the bylaws are generally compatible with the goals, policies, land uses and densities of the municipal plan, but have specific concerns as noted in the report.

Ruttenberg wished to add a note to the report that she objects to agreeing with bylaws that she did not have a hand in preparing, but concurs with the Commissioners on the report contents.

The PC report and recommendations will be forwarded to the Select Board this week.

VI. Work on updating Town Plan

- a. **Continue Town Plan update:** The draft calendar going forward for reviewing chapters will be as follows: Brown will work on Cultural Resources, and Goodrich on Population for review in November; Supplee will work on Housing for December; Rhodes will work on Economic Development for January; and Ruttenberg on Community Facilities for February.
 - i. Cultural Resources chapter: Tabled.

VII. Other Business:

VIII. Next Regular Meeting: November 20, 2017

IX. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn made at 8:36 PM. Motion carried 4-0-0.

These minutes are subject to changes and approval at the next regular meeting, but are substantially correct.