

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of March 2, 2022

The meeting was held remotely via Town GoToMeeting account. Clerk Mitch Osiecki ran the meeting from his office in the Municipal Building. All attendees participated remotely.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chair Hill-Eubanks.

Roll Call: Present for the meeting were Commissioners Laura Hill-Eubanks, Nancy Peck Ruth Ruttenberg, Aaron Rhoades, and Chandra Blackmer – all attended remotely. Clerk Mitch Osiecki facilitated the meeting from his office in the Municipal Building.

Set/Adjust Agenda: No adjustments

Public Participation: None

MPG: Discussion of the two responses received to RFQ (Request for Qualifications) for MPG project to assist with update of Municipal Zoning Bylaws.

The two RFQ's received were from Regrowth Planning of Dorset, VT and Birchline Planning, with multiple office locations.

Observation was made that RP appears to have more of a focus on in planning and design, rather than zoning regulations. Birchline Planning appears to be very active, with lots of projects under management. Will they have the availability to assist with our project? PC should keep an open mind about both clients – the interview session will provide the opportunity to have any qualms addressed.

Upcoming timeline:

- 2/18 – deadline for final proposal
- 2/23 – interviews with both prospective partners
- 3/2 – PC will make decision at regular march meeting

Ruth Ruttenberg will not be available for interviews on the 23rd. But Ruth can submit written questions for the consultants if she wishes.

Zoning Bylaw updates:

IV.04 – Existing Small Lots OK

IV.05 – Lot Line Adjustments OK

IV. 06 – Nonconforming Structures and Nonconforming Uses

B.2 – Can we make this more restrictive? In general, would like to phase out nonconforming uses over time.

B.3 – Consider expanding list of nonconforming uses (same concern).

C.2 – same concern

C.3 – Can we prohibit enlargement of a nonconforming structure?

IV.07 – Required Frontage on, or Access to, Public Roads OK

IV.08 – Setbacks Current language is confusing – simplify!

IV.09 – Height Limitations OK

IV.10 – Health Facilities OK

IV.11 – Residential Care and Group Homes Language is out-of-date; revise to conform to state statute

IV.12 – Child Care Home of Facility Language also needs to be updated in conformance with state statute

Clarify: do all child care facilities require DRB approval? Have some slipped through regulatory review? How many are there in town?

IV.13 – Mobile Home Parks Charlie Morse has added some comments for PC to review. Not clear that Charlie’s concerns are a zoning issue.

A.6 – Colin Bright suggested that we could allow a semi-porous pad

IV.14 – Signs

Sign regulations are highly detailed – can/should they be streamlined?

Section 3.a missing typo? Or dropped item? 3.c and 4 address situations when a new sign permit is warranted. Happy with these conditions?

Section C.1 Limitation on size of sign, but no specifics on how a sign is to be measured. Tighten up.

C.1.vi Illumination of signs. Generally, signs are allowed to be illuminated only when a business is open. Reasonable?

Section 3 – Flags, banners, pennants what’s the difference?

Section 5 – portable (sandwich-board) signs A few questions:

- Two-sided OK? Yes
- no illumination, no balloons, pennants, strings of lights OK?

Discussion of options for enforcement of zoning regulations. Mitch will provide everyone some written background on the issues involved and some alternative approaches that might be considered.

Approval of Minutes: Ruth Ruttenberg moved to approve minutes of Jan 5. Aaron Rhodes seconded.
Vote to approve: 5-0.

Report of the ZA: No items of particular interest in the pipeline.

Next Regular Meeting: March 2, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment: Aaron Rhodes moved to adjourn; Chandra Blackmer seconded. **Vote to approve: 5-0.**
Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.