



**Minutes for Town of Pawlet Planning Commission
Pawlet Town Office
Pawlet, VT
Monday, August 10, 2015
7:00 p.m.**

Members in Attendance:

**Wayne Clarke
Paul Elsholz
Lenny Gibson
Eric Mach**

Members Absent:

**Gary Baierlein
Fred Stone
Harry Van Meter**

Others in Attendance:

**Barbara Noyes Pulling, Rutland Regional Planning Commission
Elizabeth Gibson, Pawlet
Tim Hughes-Muse, Pawlet
Frank Nelson, West Pawlet**

Eric called the working meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Item 1: Unified Bylaws

Eric reported that he had received a letter from Ned Swanberg, a river corridor specialist at the VT Agency of Natural Resources. The letter includes suggested language for updating the Town's Unified Bylaws with regard to fluvial erosion zones/river corridor wording required to accompany the new river corridor maps that the State has developed since Pawlet adopted the Unified Bylaws. The revision is necessary because the current language in the Bylaws is outdated and that could negatively impact the Town's share of emergency relief funds. Eric suggests that we do the public hearing required for this revision at the same time that we hold the hearing required for the Town Plan revision. Eric will forward the revised wording to everyone on the Planning Commission for their review.

Item 2: Meeting Agenda and Overall Status of Progress on Town Plan Revision

Lenny reviewed the meeting agenda and overall status of work to date on the Town Plan.

Item 3. Education Chapter of the Town Plan

Lenny noted that there are two school boards in Pawlet, the UD #47 board and the Pawlet board. They are both independent entities from the Town, so the Town Plan can only make recommendations in this chapter.

Barbara said that the State is looking for broadened access to educational and vocational activities, as well as updated data on enrollments. Barbara has a checklist of items that the RRPC

is looking for but is reluctant to share that with us. She says that Brook DeBonis helped update the information in this chapter on Mettawee Community School.

Lenny pointed out that we need other means to pull the community together because Pawlet has more than one middle/high school.

Additional suggestions for this chapter:

- Eric said we should mention that the Masonic Lodge awards two \$500-scholarships.
- General consensus was to stress the importance of early education.
- Goals and recommendations need specific action items with timeframe/responsibilities. (Lenny) Add other educational opportunities such as on-farm learning through 4-H.
- Lenny will contact Brook DeBonis to get suggestions for how to improve communication between the school and the Town, and how the Town can best support the school.

There was extended discussion about whether the Town should tell the school what to do as far as curriculum topics.

Tim asked, Who is the audience for the Town Report? Lenny said that the audience falls basically into two categories: (1) Town officials which use it to guide policy setting and decision-making and (2) legal bodies, such as the local Development Review Board, Act 250 Commission, and the Public Service Board.

Item 4. Economic Development Chapter of the Town Plan

Lenny reviewed the demographic data for Pawlet, which is necessary in order to discuss economic development of the Town meaningfully. Significant demographics include: steady growth of Pawlet compared to other towns, the aging of the working population and related growth of an older age group.

Barbara said that the requirements for this chapter are that it speak to the location, type and scale of desired economic growth, and how to foster that growth. Lenny emphasized that the demographic data is necessary to understand and identify potentials for economic development.

The question is: What kinds of businesses can prosper in Pawlet's climate? Suggestions include tourism and hospitality, education, health care, slate industry. Should also mention that with the advent of fiber optic and enhanced telecommunications technology, more people are working at home. Expanding our digital infrastructure is very important for economic development.

Other suggestions: Eric mentioned that Pawlet's large industrial zone could handle more trucking, shipping, solar sites. The industrial zone is not being used to its fullest potential. Wayne noted the importance of food products and the growing market for local food, farm-to-table. This is a growth sector, along with more diversified ag products such as cheese, grass-fed beef, sweet potatoes. Important relevant examples to mention include Consider Bardwell Farm, West Pawlet Farmers Market, Village Roots Catering, Granny Blossom's Specialty Foods. Barbara mentioned the small business sector, the 1099-ers – does the town want to encourage this trend?

Barbara said that this chapter should tie into the application for village center designation. Eric mentioned the Mach's Brewery project that is developing. Lenny pointed out two very important limitations in the Pawlet Village Center as far as economic development is concerned: lack of municipal sewage treatment system and limited parking. Where is parking available in Pawlet Village? Lack of pedestrian safety in Pawlet Village is also a problem.

Item 5. Solar Siting Discussion of the Town Plan

Speaking for the Pawlet Energy Group, Elizabeth said that the model language that Barbara had forwarded for siting solar installations included very specific technical language that is beyond the scope of what the group is prepared to commit to at this point, given the rapidity at which the technology is developing and the fluidity of the siting process and related statutes. Basically the Town's position should be that it wants to be involved in any decisions by the Public Service Board, and that agricultural land should not be used for siting solar systems.

Eric agreed that solar systems should only be sited in industrial zones where 3-phase power is available. We don't want agricultural lands compromised to solar development. Other important considerations are tourism, view shed, and aesthetics. We should make some general policy statement that the Town intends to protect agricultural land and would only consider solar systems in its industrial zones, which are under-utilized.

Paul said that he has a solar siting map for the town which he will provide for this discussion.

Item 6. Flood Resilience Chapter of the Town Plan

Barbara pointed out that the version she sent out today now has the reference information and appendices.

Item 7. Implementation Chapter of the Town Plan

Paul asked how this was going to be pulled together. Lenny said that it would be compiled from the other chapters as they are completed. Paul offered to help with this process.

Item 8. Maps for the Town Plan

Barbara has printed copies of the maps that need to be finalized for inclusion in the Town Plan.

Item 9. Schedule for Completing the Town Plan

Barbara expressed doubts that the plan revision can be completed by August 24. The PPC must approve the plan at its August 24 meeting in order for Pawlet to be on schedule to renew its village center designation, which will otherwise lapse. Lenny says he will have the completed draft available by August 19 so that PPC members can review it before the August 24 monthly meeting. It was the consensus of the group to try to finish the revision by that date.

The working meeting ended at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Elizabeth Gibson, Acting Clerk