

**Minutes for Town of Pawlet Planning Commission
Pawlet Town Office
Pawlet, VT**

**Monday, August 26, 2013
7:30 p.m.**

Members in Attendance:

**John Thrasher
Wayne Clarke
Harry van Meter
Karl Eberth
Fred Stone**

Members Not in Attendance:

Gary Baierlein

Others in Attendance:

**Eric Mach (Zoning Administrator)
Cyd Groff, District Manager Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resource Conservation District
Josh Carvajal, Regional Floodplain Manager, Agency of Natural Resources
Gene Bertsche -- American Clean Energy Supply
Dave Bonta -- USA Solar Store
Larry Gibson
Frank Nelson
Kathy Doyle (Clerk)**

Item 1: Approval of Minutes, July 22, 2013.

Minutes unanimously accepted and approved.

Item 2: Zoning Administrator Report

Eric Mach reported on an application for Agricultural Use. The applicant was told that he needs to meet set back requirements or get an exemption. The Zoning Administrator does not issue such permits. Fred Stone noted that the applicant needs to send an application to Agency of Agriculture and requested that Eric inform the applicant of this.

Item 3: Comments from Audience

Item 4: Northeast Community Solar

Dave Bonta made a presentation on behalf of Northeast Community Solar. Bonta and Bertsche have purchased property in Pawlet with the purpose of building a 150 KW solar project. Mr. Bonta noted that there has been 'push back' in regard to the 'field of blue effect' created by large solar projects and they wished to put forth ideas for a new concept that would incorporate energy and resource-efficient affordable housing, bioengineering and solar energy production. Mr. Bonta presented a brief slide presentation to illustrate some of their ideas for a proposed cluster development.

John Thrasher responded that the Pawlet PC has no role in permitting and they would need to make an application to the Development Review Board to receive a permit. He indicated that the

DVB can assist with applications. Cyd Groff asked about zoning regulations for cluster development. John replied that the density of that zone is 5 acres. Ms Groff asked if the zoning regulations could be changed to accommodate cluster development. Eric replied that the reasoning behind the 5 acre minimum was to avoid the creation of new village centers. Mr. Bertsche asked for clarification of the zoning rules. John Thrasher replied that for the zone in question, the housing density can't be more than 1 dwelling per 5 acres, however based on the new bylaws, a smaller lot is allowed if there is a larger lot set aside. For example, a one-acre lot can be created if 4 acres are added to a larger parent lot. He noted that a copy of the town bylaws can be found on-line.

Item 5: Poultney-Mettowee Conservation District

Cyd Groff presented information on fluvial erosion hazards and how to mitigate impacts. Ms. Groff explained that damage caused by extra-tropical storm Irene was due to insufficient flow capacity under bridges and through culverts, such that there was no access for excess water. Ms. Groff mentioned that the PMNRCD was reaching out to municipalities to try to minimize damage in the future. She stated that impacts such as straightened rivers, levees and berms, channel dredging and lack of riparian vegetation can create fluvial erosion hazards. PMNRCD can be contacted by landowners wishing to create an easement, or implement projects such as decreasing slope steepness along riverbanks, riparian revegetation and other efforts to protect waterways.

Josh Carvajal, presented information on ERAF -- Emergency Relief Assistance Fund (ERAF) -- a funding mechanism to cover damage from state emergencies declared by the Governor. The current ERAF rules which remain in affect until 2014, stipulate that 75% of approved disaster relief is covered by the federal government while the remaining 25% is split between the state and the municipality. The new rules provide incentives (increased state match) for municipalities that adopt hazard mitigation. Under the new ERAF rules the state would fund 30%, 50% or 70% of the required match depending on the degree to which the municipality adopts hazard mitigation measures. The minimum measures include: 1) adopt VTrans town road and bridge standards as outlined in the 'orange book'; 2)adopt flood hazard bylaws; 3) adopt FEMA approved local hazard mitigation plan; and 4) adopt a local emergency operations plan .

6: PPC member terms and filling Tom Nelson's seat.

John Thrasher reported that the following four seats will expire in March 2014: Tom Nelson (open), Gary Baierlein, John Thrasher, Fred Stone and Wayne Clarke. The remaining seats held by Harry van Meter and Karl Eberth will expire in 2015. John would like to make a suggestion to the select board that the term lengths of the seven seats be staggered so that fewer seats would expire in a given year.

There was a discussion on filling Tom Nelson's vacated seat which expires in March 2014. Eric Mach indicated that he would like to apply for the position. John Thrasher asked if anyone else was interested in filling the open seat. Lenny Gibson said he was interested, as did Frank Nelson. After a discussion it was decided that the Planning Commission would put forth the three names and allow the select board decide.

Item 7: Old Business

Eric Mach noted that the select board needs to be reminded to hold a public hearing on the bylaws. John Thrasher mentioned that he would go to the select board, remind them about the need for a public hearing, ask about staggering the PC seats and put the three names forward to fill the seat vacated by Tom Nelson.

Frank Nelson mentioned that his father has a file on Planning Commission business that might be of interest and John Thrasher indicated that he would like to take a look at it.

Item 8: New Business

Eric announced that new planning grants are available. Lenny Gibson noted that as the town needs to update the plan, which is due to expire in 2015, it would be good to apply for a planning grant. John Thrasher noted that it would be good for someone to take the lead on this. Harry mentioned that the PC needs to put a schedule together for creating a new town plan.

Item 8: Set Agenda for next month's meeting Sept. 23

Review Minutes, Audience Comments, Zoning Administrator's Report, Filling open seat, Staggering terms of planning commission seats, Public meeting on bylaws, Schedule for updating the town plan, New Business and Set Agenda for Next Meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kathy Doyle, Clerk.

