

**Minutes for Town of Pawlet Planning Commission
Pawlet Town Office
Pawlet, VT
Monday, August 28, 2014
7:30 p.m.**

Members in Attendance:

**John Thrasher
Wayne Clarke
Harry van Meter
Eric Mach
Lenny Gibson**

Members Not in Attendance

**Fred Stone
Gary Baierlein
Others in Attendance:
Susan Laporte
Elizabeth Gibson
Frank Nelson
Kathy Doyle, Clerk**

Item 1: Approval of Minutes June 2014

The following changes were noted: *piece meal* should be written *piecemeal*; replace *and* with *land* and insert a comma after Flower Brook instead of a period. Lenny moved to approve minutes with suggested changes; Wayne seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

Item 2: Zoning Administrator Report

Eric investigated gravel pit on the Bryant farm and found no violation. He received approval from the select board to write a municipal planning grant (mpg). Eric will have a draft of the grant for review at the next meeting. Eric noted that no application exists for subdivisions; John Thrasher said he will get some examples so the board could draft a subdivision application.

Item 3: New Business

John drafted and sent a letter to the Vermont Land Trust. He stated that he got an e-mail from Hilary Solomon at PMNRCD saying that the district received half of the funding requested for the storm water planning for Pawlet. She would like to present a draft work plan at the next meeting. Solomon noted that as there is much emphasis by the state on flood resilience, if funds are being requested for a mpg to update the town plan and compile information for the natural resource section, the stream studies that PMNRCD will be doing would be complemented by that work. John suggested that Eric coordinate with Hilary Solomon and Kathy Doyle to discuss how to incorporate flood resilience into the mpg.

Item 4: Other New Business

Elizabeth Gibson said application forms could be put on the planning commission web page.

Elizabeth Gibson and Sue Laporte, representing the Town Energy Committee, presented an outline for the energy section of the town plan. Elizabeth noted that the outline includes what is required by the legislature. She emphasized that the Public Service Board refers to town plans in evaluating proposed projects. Elizabeth emphasized the need to coordinate all sections of the plan with the overall vision of the plan. Elizabeth said the Energy Committee could make recommendations on priorities and that they

plan to stress energy efficiency and conservation. In regard to renewable energy projects, the committee plans to provide specific criteria for evaluating proposed projects. Eric said he would want the plan to address transportation and heating. Elizabeth said that would be included. Eric referred to energy efficient building codes and provided Elizabeth a copy, but noted there is no local or state enforcement.

A discussion on energy ensued. Wayne mentioned the importance of clearly stating the town's vision in the plan to put forth a case to the Public Service Board to avoid 'unintended consequences' of energy development such as the loss of the town's rural character. Eric said he would like to see the town steer energy development to the industrial zone. Lenny questioned if renewable energy projects were appropriate for Pawlet and emphasized that production of agricultural products contributes to the overall energy production by the town. John stated that the town needs to be concerned with developing criteria that is in line with the charge of the Public Service Board. Lenny mentioned that statute also compels the select board to take action based on what is included in the town plan.

John asked for a straw poll to determine if the Planning Commission agrees that conservation should be the focus of the energy portion of town plan. Lenny says feels conservation is cheapest approach. Wayne said there are diminishing returns on conservation, but thinks conservation is one import factor. Harry stated that conservation is an important factor, but since land development puts a stress on the town, he would like to see policy restricting development as well. Eric stated that he thinks conservation is the most important element, but it should not be the only focus. John stated he heard a consensus by the board that there is a need to focus on two things -- energy conservation and criteria to direct the development of energy projects.

Elizabeth said criteria for development might be in other sections of plan and emphasized the need for the energy section to be coordinated with other sections. Elizabeth asked where the energy group should get language on land use policies to use as a guide. John said the board is refining the plan and that there was no specific timeline other than completing the plan by fall 2015. He noted that he does not see a big change in land use policies, but updating the energy section and bolstering the agriculture section are major issues. John advised the Energy Committee to write about conservation and the context for renewable energy development occurring within the town. Eric stated that he felt the outline was a good start. John thanked the energy committee for their input.

Item 5: Old Business

Eric said he would work with the regional planning commission and PMNRCD regarding the municipal planning grant. John stated that due to work constraints he may be resigning and would know by next meeting, but receiving a mpg might sway his decision. There was a discussion about who might be hired to do the work if the town was awarded a municipal planning grant. Eric said he thought the regional planning commission might like to do some of the work and he could ask Ed Bove if he would come to the next meeting. Lenny indicated concern that there not be a 'cookie cutter' approach to the plan. John stated that it would be best to tweak the application for the mpg so it has a flood component and to work with PMNRCD to leverage the work they are doing. John said a focus of the town plan would be to promote development outside of the flood plain and to change historic development patterns so that housing is moved outside the floodplain.

Item 6: Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Approval of Minutes; Comments from the Audience; Zoning Administrator's Report; New Business; Old Business: Review of proposed municipal planning grant and determine scope of work, and update from PMNRCD; Set agenda for next meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Kathy Doyle, Clerk.