

Minutes of Town of Pawlet Planning Commission
Pawlet Town Offices
Monday, July 22, 2013, 7:30 pm

Members in Attendance:

Fred Stone
Gary Baierlein
Wayne Clarke
Harry van Meter
John Thrasher
Karl Eberth

Others in Attendance:

James Glick
Lenny Gibson
Jaime Lee, RRPC
Eric Mach, Zoning Admin.
Jacki Lappen, substitute PPC clerk

Members not in Attendance:

none

John Thrasher opened the meeting with the announcement that Tom Nelson has passed away. Eric Mach stated that Tom may have been the last original member of the PPC. The PPC expressed its appreciation for Tom's time and service.

Item 1

Review minutes

Minutes of the June 24, 2013 meeting and the July 1, 2013 public hearing were unanimously accepted.

Item 2

Audience

No comments from the audience.

Item 3

Zoning administrator's report

Eric reported doing a lot of sign removal – Liebig's and some advertising firewood. He resolved an issue regarding an apartment in a barn and is working on a Dorr application and other small matters.

Item 4

Subdivision regulations – Jaime Lee, Rutland Regional Planning Commission

Two major comments at the public hearing were addressed about the unified bylaws. One is kennels, which will now be a conditional use. The second is reducing minimum lot size in West Pawlet Village. Jaime Lee distributed proposed language, as the PPC had asked her to do. The PPC's concerns were about sufficient off-street parking and green space. Current minimum lot

size is 12,000 square feet. Eric suggested 9,000 square feet and 25% lot coverage, which would mean 2,250 square feet as maximum unit size. The PPC discussed what areas in the Village would be affected as many structures are grandfathered. The benefit of utilizing the excess capacity of the sewage treatment plant was raised, as were snow removal and the idea of a municipal parking area. The current parking space requirement was questioned as potentially inadequate. Input from Village residents may be helpful. Property in the Village is limited by the slag heaps and the river. PPC members agreed to defer changes to reducing minimum lot size in West Pawlet Village until more research is done.

MOTION made by Fred Stone to recommend that the current version of the proposed unified bylaws be forwarded to the Select Board for their approval. Harry van Meter and Karl Eberth both seconded. Unanimously approved.

The PPC thanked Jaime Lee for all her hard work and gave her a round of applause.

Item 5

New business

1. Poultney-Mettowee Conservation District project. While approving this project may have the Town self-reporting a problem, a problem definitely exists and it is likely the State will mandate that this problem be corrected at some point in the future. Some of the problem is septic and some is agricultural. Eric Mach reported a septic smell under the store with low water levels. It may behoove the Town to take advantage of the Conservation District professional currently working on this issue, especially with regard to applying for a grant.

MOTION made by Harry van Meter to make a recommendation to the Select Board in support of the Poultney-Mettowee Conservation District grant application for a study about cleaning up Flower Brook. Fred Stone seconded. Unanimously approved.

2. Electing new PPC members. Fred Stone recommended the PPC develop a consistent approach for new membership, whereby the PPC nominates new members and forwards those nominations to the Select Board. The Select Board has the authority to appoint PPC members, but there is concern about the Select Board appointing them without adequate review and input by the PPC. He also recommended that there be a mechanism for removing incompatible members. John Thrasher will research the terms of current members, so PPC members can be put on the correct staggered appointment schedule.
3. Training for the DRB. With the proposed unified bylaws, there are now major projects and subdivision reviews that will require training for DRB members. The League of Cities and Towns will come to regular DRB meetings and do these trainings, potentially for a small fee. John Thrasher made the point that the PPC has the obligation to partner its recommendation to the Select Board of the unified bylaws with its explicit support for DRB training to implement them adequately. PPC members unanimously agreed to this.
4. PPC's position on being a 1-acre or 10-acre town under Act 250. If the Select Board approves the unified bylaws, only projects greater than 10 acres will come under Act 250 review. Gary Baierlein advocated for this change, saying it is better for applicants to meet with the local DRB than with State officials. John Thrasher used the dollar store as an example of a project potentially between 1 acre and 10 acres that, if a permitted use in a zone, would not get State or Town review. Karl Eberth suggested that the Select Board poll

town members to see what they want. Zoning Administrator Eric Mach recommended that we become a 10-acre town. The PPC will inform the Select Board that there is no issue with becoming a 10-acre town.

Item 6

Set agenda for next month's meeting

The next meeting is Monday, August 26, at 7:30 pm. Topics include Northeast Community Solar, the Poultney-Mettowee Conservation District, PPC member terms, and nominating a new member to fill Tom Nelson's seat.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Jacki Lappen, temporary substitute for PPC Clerk