

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

Members in Attendance:

**John Thrasher
Wayne Clarke
Gary Baierlein
Eric Mach
Fred Stone
Lenny Gibson**

Members Not in Attendance

Harry van Meter

Others in Attendance:

**Donald Campbell. VLT
Paul Elsholz
Frank Nelson
Kathy Doyle, Clerk**

Item 1: Approval of Minutes June 2014:

Wayne Clarke stated that “*draft action items for various sections of the plan to carry out the town vision*” be changed to *critically review and draft proposed action items when appropriate* (item 5). Harry Van Meter should not be listed as present at the meeting. A motion to approve minutes as amended was made by Fred Stone and seconded by Wayne Clarke and carried unanimously.

Item 2: New Business:

John indicated that they would address new business first since Donald Campbell had come to the meeting to discuss Vermont Land Trust (VLT) projects affecting the town. Donald Campbell described two projects that are in the works and asked for a letter stating that (one or both) projects are consistent with the vision of the town plan. He indicated that the project on the Waite Farm was more time sensitive and he would appreciate a letter within a month. The Waite project entails the purchase of development rights for the agricultural acres (forest land and home site are excluded). The project is being funded by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and includes the designation of a wetland special treatment area. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is involved with helping to fund manure storage, fencing, improved water runoff and the possibility of moving the barn, efforts aimed at improving water quality in Flower Brook.

Mr. Campbell described a second project involving the Bryant Farm where the Vermont Land Trust is working with the owner to reclaim an old gravel pit to agricultural land. He noted that the owner needs to finish the gravel pit before funding can be secured.

Wayne asked for feedback about solar installation on agricultural land. Donald Campbell acknowledged that there can be a conflict with agricultural preservation and noted that conserved parcels are allowed to generate solar energy for energy production on site.

Donald Campbell asked about the best process for discussing the projects in the works. John Thrasher stated that it was helpful for Donald to come and present the projects, noting that it was especially beneficial to learn about efforts affecting water quality in Flower Brook.

John invited discussion on the VLT projects. Fred stated that he supported conserving the Waite property because of water quality issues. John Thrasher indicated he was in favor of the project emphasizing that the Planning Commission has heard from PMNRCD that the town needs to focus on the clean-up of Flower Brook, so it makes sense to do work upstream. Eric and Gary stated that they were in favor of the project and Eric made a motion to send a letter in support of the Waite project. Fred seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Fred stated that he did not want to send approval of the Bryant project until they received assurance that the gravel pit was finished and in compliance with regulations.

Item 3: Zoning Administrator Report

Eric stated that he had received an inquiry and expects an application for a garage in the Industrial Zone which would be a permitted use. John Thrasher noted that the issue of compliance of the aforementioned gravel pit should be explored.

Item 4: Other New Business:

John received a memo from the public service board (PSB) which indicated that any comments or recommendations regarding the definition of terms 'good cause' and "substantial deference" are due by Aug 1. John stated that the PSB is being required by the legislature to include definitions of these terms. John stated that he feels that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns can address the issue effectively, but noted that if anyone has thoughts they could contact him.

John also received a notice stating that the municipal planning grant deadline is September 30. There is an emphasis on projects that improve flood resilience, revitalize downtowns and make town plans more consistent with state wide planning goals.

John referred to correspondence that he forwarded regarding a proposed revision to a renewable energy project on Route 30. The proposal would expand the footprint and total energy produced of the solar energy project. John asked for comments or concerns. He stated that the applicant had requested a letter stating that the project does not conflict with the orderly development of Pawlet, thereby waiving notice.

Wayne raised concerns about the piecemeal development of land and how this could impact the agricultural economy of the town and stated that he would like the commission to put down in writing that site selection is important when siting such projects. Lenny said he did not see the benefit of writing a letter which would waive notice. Eric provided background on the parcel in question stating that the landowner tried to sell the property for development, but it did not perk because of clay soils. The property is currently a hayfield and could not be developed. John Thrasher stated that he did not feel that solar development has to interfere with agricultural use as the applicant spoke of continuing agricultural use and there is no negative impact on the long term agricultural use of the land.

Gary stated that such projects reduce the dependency on fossil fuels and have the added benefit of keeping honeysuckle and other invasive shrubs from establishing, as is happening in many other areas.

John reiterated that the applicant was asking the Planning Commission to write a letter and waive notice. Lenny and Wayne stated that they did not support waiving notice. The board determined that a letter would not be written waiving notice.

Item 5: Old Business --

Lenny asked about a time line for the revision of the plan. The section of the minutes from June describing who would work on what sections was read. John stated that would like to see a draft of the town plan completed by the spring so that changes could be made during the summer of 2015 in time for a public hearing in the fall. John stated that next month the Energy Committee would report on their work on the energy section of the town plan and that members should bring concerns regarding energy issues to the next meeting.

Item 6: Set Agenda for Next Meeting:

Approval of Minutes, July 2014; Comments from the Audience; Zoning Administrator Report; New Business; Old Business – Energy Committee to present information about the town plan; Set Agenda for Next Meeting.

John Thrasher made a motion to adjourn and Lenny Gibson seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:55.

Minutes submitted by Kathy Doyle, Clerk.