

**Minutes for Town of Pawlet Planning Commission
Pawlet Town Office, Pawlet, VT
Monday, February 24, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.**

Members in Attendance:

**Harry van Meter
Fred Stone
Eric Mach
John Thrasher**

Members Not in Attendance:

**Gary Baierlein
Wayne Clarke**

Others in Attendance:

**Frank Nelson
Lenny Gibson
Kathy Doyle (Clerk)**

Item 1: Approval of Minutes, January 2014

John called attention to the statement about gravel pits on the top of page 2 that begins with "harry noted". John stated that the statement is incorrect as any commercial activity is subject to Act 250 approval, but Act 250 would not kick in for a gravel pit unless they are greater than 10 acres. The Minutes were approved unanimously with clarification as stated above.

Item 2: Public Input and complete work on Town Plan Vision Statement

Discussion about changes to the Vision statement commenced. The board gave Elizabeth Gibson permission to post the Vision statement on the town website in draft form. John asked for any changes to vision statement. Harry said, he thinks the terms are good as written. He stated that he thinks the existing wording is fine in regard to "traditional settlement patterns" as he does not think that this means that people can develop in floodplains. John Thrasher said that his intent was to preserve the look of how Vermont was developed. John suggested that "traditional development patterns" could be defined.

Lenny noted that in terms of determining where new development could occur, Donald Campbell of the Vermont Land Trust had suggested "Cemetery Hill". Eric said, there is not much room for expansion on Cemetery Hill, but there is room on "Town Hill". Eric said that the biggest potential for expansion of the village is the orchard area behind the church. Fred Stone stated that that this area is wet. Lenny noted the need to think about expansion of the village in light of Irene. He commented that the cement wall by the post office may increase velocity of water downstream. Lenny stated that it seems pretty obvious that there will be a need for wastewater treatment as regulations are tighter. Eric agreed that due to regulations for storm water, the town needs to do something. John asked if this suggests that the village zoning district needs to be amended. Lenny said that he was suggesting that as the town thinks about future land use, it might be a good idea to begin to get the village out of areas where floodwaters are problematic. John stated that a goal could be that future land use regulations take into account the likelihood of flooding due to major weather events.

Fred noted that he thinks the town might discourage development in Pawlet and encourage more development in West Pawlet. John stated that VLT is reluctant to conserve areas where future growth

should be happening. John said that the problem with developing the village of West Pawlet is that the area to the west is NY and much of the area to the south is conserved and to the north are slate quarries.

Frank noted that he feels that to preserve the historic settlement pattern does not mean you have to develop in the village. He thinks what is important is to avoid strip malls, 100 lot subdivisions, or 5 acre cookie cutter lots.

Harry made a motion to accept town vision statement as written. Fred Stone seconded. All in favor. Lenny suggested that Elizabeth could provide some edits. Other agreed that the vision statement is not set in stone.

Harry noted that in regard to the sewage treatment plant in West Pawlet, it would be good to have a GIS layer showing what buildings are connected to it. John agreed this would be a good layer and he suggested that Select Board Chair, Mike Beacher be consulted. Harry asked if there were other GIS layers to be added. John said that school bus stops might be another layer that would help improve efficiency on a district wide scale, but noted that this changes every year.

Item 3: Comments from Audience

Frank asked if there was any promotion of green building in the vision statement such as solar. John Thrasher said the town plan will address energy. Lenny commented that the PACE program helps people improve energy efficiency. Frank commented that some people won't qualify for PACE due to poor credit scores.

John stated that the town plan addresses vision for the future, not specific action items even though energy goals are important. He said PACE would need to be considered by the Select board and voted on by the town. John stated that the town plan will address if the town is in support of or opposed to various forms of alternative energy. Lenny stated that it is important to consider energy conservation. John says he thinks that the Board would agree that energy conservation makes sense.

Item 4: Zoning Administrator Report

Eric said no new building permits had been submitted. He said there were several inquiries from realtors and potential purchasers regarding zoning regulations. Eric said there was a property in West Pawlet, most of which lies in floodplain, that the Vermont Land Trust is working to conserve. He noted that a person asked about when subdivision regulations would be adopted and when they would take effect. John will follow up on this.

Item 5: New Business

John stated that he received a Legislative Action Alert email stating that after July 1, 2014, towns can once again regulate telecommunications facilities. He said that the prohibition put into place in 2011 by the state is expiring.

Item 6: Old Business

John asked about next steps for the town plan. Eric said he thought the energy and affordable housing sections should be addressed. Lenny said 'affordable housing' was addressed in 2007 by state statute, Chapter 117, and Act 115. He noted that substantial changes in zoning ordinances made affordable housing more available. He also commented that the 2005 town plan stated that affordable housing needed to be addressed and provisions were made regarding affordable housing in the zoning bylaws.

Lenny mentioned census data is not yet available. John said it was his opinion that while data needs to be updated in the plan, census data should be worked on last, so that more information would be available.

John suggested that the board invite the energy committee to meet with the board. Harry volunteered to bring it up at the next Energy meeting.

Fred stated that when they work on the water section, the PMNRCD should be invited as the plan needs to have something on water quality.

Lenny noted that the 2010 plan did not adequately reflect school enrollment figures and the school is very significant for the town. He said enrollment was accurate before 2010. John said he would get enrollment figures.

John asked Lenny how child care data was obtained. Lenny said this was not compiled in 2005.

John suggested getting someone from the highway crew in to speak with the board. Eric said that roads in Pawlet are in two separate transportation districts which impacts funding. He said that the town is not represented in the Bennington district.

John asked the Board to read two sections of the 2010 plan on physical characteristics and land use and related resources on pages 4 -12 to come up with changes, deletions and additions. He noted that he feels that the existing town plan lacks a unified voice, but he is not interested in the flow at this point, but ideas on what kind of document the next plan should be.

John asked Eric to get a sense of the number of zoning applications. He asked Fred to invite Hilary Solomon of PMNRCD to an upcoming meeting. He suggested there should be input from VLT to save town leg work on language. Fred emphasized that language should reflect the town vision. Eric suggested inviting Philip Ackerman Leist to come to discuss promoting small farm viability.

Lenny suggested providing a listing of businesses in town since having viable businesses is an important economic factor.

Item 6: Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Approve minutes, Comments from the Audience, Zoning, New business, Old business: Discuss Town plan pages 4-12.

Minutes submitted by Kathy Doyle, Clerk.