

**PLANNING COMMISSION
TOWN OF PAWLET
Monday August 27, 2018, 7:30 pm**

Members present:

RIK SASSA
HARRY VAN METER
ERIC MACH
MARK FROST
WAYNE CLARKE
GARY BAIRLEIN

Members absent:

MELISSA LACOUNT

Others attending:

KEITH MASON, MICHELLE TILANDER, KEN NORMAN, ELI-ANITA NORMAN, BETH-MOSER DUQUETTE, RAY DUQUETTE SR., ANNE HADEKA, LOWELL FERGUSON, GARY HADEKA, JOHN DAVIS, VALERIE DAVIS, RITA ROBERTS, PAUL TILLANDER, JERRY E. AUSTIN, ED VALLERIE, JACKIE VALLERIE, TOM VAN ZANDT, AMY MURPHY, RHONDA SCHLANGEN, GABE RUSSO, DANIEL S. BANYAI, TOM AYERS, JACK REILLY, CRIS REILLY, FRANK NELSON

1. Call to order

Harry Van Meter called the meeting to order at 7:33pm

2. Approval of Agenda Items - Review/Add/Delete

Eric Mach wanted to move the zoning administrator's report to before the public comments. Wayne Clarke made a motion to approve this change. Mark Frost seconded. Motion passed.

3. Approval of minutes of previous meeting

Eric Mach made a motion to approve July minutes. Rik Sassa seconded. Motion passed.

4. Zoning Administrator's Report- introduction of new Zoning Administrator

Harry Van Meter introduced Hal Wilkins as the new Zoning Administrator. Hal comes with experience from several other town's zoning administrations. Hal discussed several permits that are coming up. One particular permit request for DRB to address in September. Hal said what he would provide the Selectboard with a regular written report. He will also attend each month's Planning Commission meeting.

5. Public Comments:

Frank Nelson provided some information on Manchester Wood closing after 42 years. Frank felt that when the Planning Commission looks into economic development they should look into some of the advantages that Washington

County throws out to businesses just across the border. Frank also spoke about “opportunity zones” which have to do with tax credits in the state. It encourages investment of capital gains into almost any type of development. This would come through in 2019.

6. Proposed Bylaws revision:

This meeting was warned as a discussion of proposed amendment to the town’s Unified Bi-laws. Rik Sassa read from the amendment:

“(7.) “Public School” means an elementary school or secondary school operated by a school district. A public school may maintain evening or summer schools for its students and it shall be considered a public school.

(8.) “Independent School” means a school other than a public school, which provides a program of elementary or secondary education, or both. An “independent school meeting deduction quality standards” means an independent school in Vermont that undergoes the education quality standards process and meets the requirements of subsection 165(b) of this title.”

Having read the above to the citizens present, Harry Van Meter asked if there was any comments. Daniel Banyai questioned the amendment, feeling that currently existing schools like karate, dance, etc would now be invalid. Wayne Clarke explained that the state sets the rules for schools and independent schools. This amendment will now go before the Selectboard.

7. Economic Development Work Plan:

Wayne Clarke spoke about forestry and how to expand the connection between forestry and business. Washington County cheese tour is a good example of marketing local products. Eric Mach had a list of crafters from Mettowee Makers that encompasses the whole of the Mettowee Valley. Beth Moser-Duquette said that as a small business owner, her experience was having a good wifi signal, was a massive struggle. Harry Van Meter asked who had fiber optics in the area. Keith Mason said that V-Tel did not extend to the 645 exchange (which is mostly West Pawlet). Beth went on to say that many stores have store fronts but also an online presence. Eric Mach said that the Public Service Board is in charge of those decisions regarding coverage and quality thereof. Mark Frost spoke about Agriculture. Farm stays, bed-breakfast and work, etc. Gary Bairlein said that there are situations where people will pay to stay and gather sap from buckets for sugaring. Mark went on to speak about Pick your own operations, and farm to school (feeding the kids with locally raised produce). This helps local farmers because the money goes back into the local economy. Beth confirmed that her store was an educational opportunity for those visiting it, regarding where food comes from, etc. Mark Frost asked Ray Duquette Sr. about farmers markets in the area. Ray said that the farmers markets were getting flooded, and hence less profitable for the venders. The population base around here is just too small.

Harry Van Meter observed that the Dorset farmers market attracted a lot of cars with out of state plates. Rik Sassa said that he was compiling a list of local businesses that related to tourism. A letter/survey that would determine each individual owners needs designed to see if there were common interests to focus on. Gary Bairlein, on Industry, said, as far as infrastructure, we need to have businesses here before you can get matching dollars. Harry Van Meter suggested that a plan was needed to grow into. Gary said his experience as a small business owner has not been a good one since the outset. The fact that both towns are missing a general store, which brought a lot of life to the towns. Gary thought that we needed to look into the conditional uses of the bi-laws. This would encourage people to expand their businesses rather than fly under the radar. Harry Van Meter spoke about energy and using industrial land as solar fields. Eric Mach said that two solar projects would be moving ahead. Harry Van Meter said that he was not so sure that they were going to be moving ahead having spoken to the town's legal advisor, John Thrasher, who said one project was on hold. Eric added that solar site location can be suggested in the town plan, but not the town zoning. Ray Duquette Sr. said he was concerned that solar panels should not go on otherwise good agricultural land. He and others agreed that the slag heaps around town would be ideal locations for solar. Harry wanted to get the state solar suitability maps of the area to see an overlay of effective use.

8. New business:

Frank Nelson offered some historical perspective; saying that in the past the Argyle Catheter plant, GE and another business in Manchester offered good paying jobs and West Pawlet and Pawlet were the bedroom communities for them. Hal Wilkins said that village center designation doesn't tend to generate much added activity unless it is a town that already has a life. Form base zoning, he thought was a good idea and worth the Planning Commission looking into. Other towns have had good success with Form Base Zoning. Hal suggested that "ghost businesses" that Gary was referring to earlier need to be encouraged rather than feeling like they need to be secretive. South Burlington was cited as an example of bi-laws that were literally a piece of lumber, being so thick and complex. Form Base coding could be specific to particular zoning districts, generally the downtown core.

9. Adjournment:

Harry Van Meter thanked the public for their attendance. Eric Mach made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mark Frost seconded, motion passed and meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm. Next meeting of the Pawlet Planning Commission is September 24. It will follow the above agenda.

Respectfully submitted by Rik Sassa, secretary.