

Town of Pawlet

Planning Commission Meeting

Tuesday, March 1st, 2022 7:30pm

Meeting via Zoom platform

Members present:

Jessica Van Oort, Chairperson

John Sabotka, Vice Chairperson

Rik Sassa, Clerk/Secretary

Frank Nelson

Gary Baierlein

Mark Frost

Harley Cudney

Wayne Clark (alternate member)

Ed Bove (Rutland Regional)

Bob and Martha Shoenemann (Public)

Members absent:

Item 1. Call to Order:

Jessica called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

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

Item 3. Approval of minutes of previous meeting:

Mark Frost moved to approve previous minutes, Gary Baierlein seconded, all approved.

Item 4. Zoning Administrator's Report- Jonas Rosenthal:

Jonas was unavailable for a report.

Item 5. Rutland Regional Commission Report- John Sabotka:

John Sabotka gave his report on the Rutland Regional Commission. There was some explanation at the meeting of what was required for the grant proposal. Jessica said that she would make sure the Select Board was made aware of the requirements. Harley Cudney asked if the PPC gets involved with the grant writing process. Jessica said they can be but it is usually the Select Board that handles that part. Frank Nelson clarified that the PPC is more involved with the planning end of things.

Item 6. Otter Creek Communications District report- Jessica Van Oort

Jessica said she had no report from the CUD. The municipal planning grant committee met and there was some interest from the community. March 18th is the deadline for the proposals and then a designer would be sought out to assist from there. Information regarding this is also on the town website.

Item 7. Public Comments:

Martha Schoenemann congratulated Harley Cudney as a new member of the committee. Jessica asked if Harley wanted to give any details about his experience. He gave some details about his career and time in Pawlet since 2018.

Item 8. On-going Business: Enhanced Energy Plan

Jessica directed the conversation to the bi-law modernization grant. She offered highlights of the grant: Revisiting dimensional requirements for in town buildings, making it a little easier to build in town. Accessory dwelling units and how they fit in to the bi-laws. Mixed use especially ARR zone, regarding subdividing lots. Short term rentals vs. long term housing.

There are certain provisions that the grant must address as well in order to have it granted. Frank mentioned the PUD's (public Unit Development) along with the state requirements. Gary also wanted to make sure that the streamlining and standardizing of conditional uses would be included as well. Gary hoped that Ed Bove could read through our conditional uses to see if anything stood out that needed attention.

Ed Bove said the goal of the state was to create more mixed use housing opportunities where appropriate. He thought that Pawlet was a good example of a community that represented what the grant was trying to target; maximizing the town's infrastructure as it expands while not over burdening the towns working rural lands.

He said that he has gone through the town's bi-laws. He said there are only a few targeted places to address to achieve the goal of what the grant is looking for. It's a two year grant so there is time to methodically go through the bi-laws and connect them with density issues. Jessica went through the steps to design the grant proposal. Ed said that updating the town's bi-laws would be a valuable piece to the grant.

Harley asked if the state has bi-laws that the town has to comply with, and if there were other towns that Pawlet could use as a model. Jessica said the state has Act 250 which applies to development on parcels over 10 acres. Ed said that there are state statutes that bi-laws can't

touch and what town bi-laws can do. This bi-law modernization grant is a new grant and has not been done before. It is all around the same concept of removing some of these low density restrictions that are inhibiting the direction that the state would like to move in.

Ed gave an example of Sunderland, VT where all the parking restrictions were taken out of the bi-laws to encourage economic development.

Frank offered the example of the high cost of property and that leasing might provide some relief for start up businesses in the industrial zone. Village overlays that would allow use of the West Pawlet sewer plant to allow for smaller plots that would not require septic installations. Jessica asked Ed about village overlays. He said that the bi-laws already talk about the lot size and density regarding sewage and that could be altered to accommodate whatever direction the town wanted to go.

Frank thought that some conditional use language for the DRB to determine some of the density issues would be handy since the lot size per unit might have problems. Ed said that non conforming structures are the sticking point since the bi-laws were written after an older town need for housing or businesses had been established. "Grandfathering" exemptions are transitional band-aids that eventually fall through the cracks. Ed thought that probably most of West Pawlet village was nonconforming structures.

Jessica suggested that the next meeting be split between enhanced energy and working on a plan for the kick off meeting regarding this grant proposal.

Harley said that he had been to multiple kick off meetings and suggested that the scope of the meeting be submitted a couple of months in advance (even a month by month plan for the PPC) then warning to the public.

Jessica asked the committee: If the PPC is working on big changes by 2023 should we be breaking the effort into smaller warnings, maybe one half way through? Some conversation ensued regarding businesses that might be currently trying to establish themselves in town. In particular, a couple that approached the PPC about a wedding barn destination facility and whether that was a blind spot in the bi-laws and if so was it something that needed immediate attention. The general feeling was not to rush since the particular wedding issue also involved Act 250 due to lot size and was not solely up to the town.

Jessica also asked the Committee if looking at existing lot sizes in both Pawlet and West Pawlet would be a good way to start out this process. Frank suggested a possible site visit to West Pawlet and or Pawlet. The commissioners seemed to think that looking at the town maps regarding lot size, etc. first, then a site visit to the towns would be a good start.

Ed said that he would provide a map that has the lot sizes as well as the zoning districts that would be handy while looking at the permitted and conditional uses in the current bi-laws.

Item 9. New Business:

There was no new business.

Item 10. Set Agenda for next meeting:

Call to Order 7:30 2. Approval of Agenda Items - Review/Add/Delete 7:31 3. Approval of minutes of previous meeting 7:33 4. Zoning Administrator's Report – Jonas Rosenthal 7:45 6. Rutland Regional Planning Commission Report – Tom Collard 8:00 7. Discussion of Topics & On-going Business 8:05 8. Public Comments 8:25 9. Old Business 8:35 10. New business 8: 45 11. Set Agenda for the next meeting 8:55 12. Adjournment 9:00

Item 11. Adjournment:

Mark motioned to adjourn the meeting, Gary seconded, all approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:59pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rik Sassa, Secretary and Clerk.