

**Brandon Planning Commission Meeting
July 16, 2018**

Board Members Present: Stephanie Jerome, Ethan Nelson, Michael Shank, Lisa Rovi, Bill Mills

Also in Attendance: Jeff Biasuzzi – Zoning Administrator, Dave Atherton

1. Call to order

Stephanie Jerome, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Michael Shank to approve the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Consent Agenda

a. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes – June 4, 2018

A motion was made by Michael Shank to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of June 4, 2018. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Zoning Administrator's Report

Jeff Biasuzzi started today as Brandon's Zoning Administrator. Mr. Biasuzzi has been a Zoning Administrator for several years in the towns of Clarendon, Wallingford, Castleton, West Rutland and Pittsford. He has experience in filing permits, doing appeals and drafting decisions for boards. Mr. Biasuzzi was a real estate broker, a consulting forester for 45 years and has built 40 houses as a general contractor. Stephanie Jerome advised the Planning Commission's role is updating the Town Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Jerome requested Mr. Biasuzzi advise the Commission of any conflicts he sees in the Town Plan or Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Biasuzzi stated in working with the ordinances and plans every day, he appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the Planning Commission. In reviewing Brandon's Zoning Ordinance, he thought those rules are up to date, but has not had an opportunity to study the Town Plan. Mr. Biasuzzi also noted it is important to educate residents on the zoning regulations. Ms. Jerome advised the land use ordinances are currently being updated and the Commission has a list of items they would like to update and address. This year, there were changes made in signage, trailers and farm animals. The Planning Commission is also updating the plans for energy and the river corridor. Mr. Biasuzzi is receptive to learning more about river corridor plans, noting he has stayed up to date with training on zoning information. Dave Atherton stated the Town has good connections with Hazard Mitigation and when the Planning Commission begins work on the River Corridor plan, he will request someone from the State assist in this effort. Mr. Atherton advised the staff at the Town Office would post the meeting agendas and help with the packets for the Planning Commission meetings. Mr. Biasuzzi suggested he could provide a summary of the Zoning Administrator's activities via email to the Planning Commission. Michael Shank suggested the Zoning Administrator attend an occasional meeting. Ms. Jerome suggested Elaine could provide the agenda and other pertinent information for the Planning Commission's meeting via email. Mr. Biasuzzi encouraged the Planning Commission when writing rules that impact people to try to build as much common sense, clarity and flexibility into the rules for ease of use by both the Zoning Administrator and the residents. Mr. Biasuzzi's hours of operation in Brandon, which could be flexible, are currently scheduled to be all day on Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons. Dave Atherton suggested once the construction is completed; it may be the time for the Planning Commission to consider moving towards Form Base Code.

5. Review Comments from Select Board Hearing re: BLUO Changes

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The Planning Commission reviewed the comments provided by Seth Hopkins at the Select Board hearing for the BLUO changes. Mr. Hopkins questioned the requirement for natural materials to be used for the signs. Michael Shank stated sandwich boards could be of a material other than natural materials. Dave Atherton stated the plastic boards stand up better from the wind. Mr. Shank noted the natural materials have to do with fixed signs on storefronts and sandwich board signs could be of any material. Ethan Nelson suggested a clause such as: “unless otherwise accepted or approved by the Zoning Administrator” could possibly be included. It was the intent of the Planning Commission that fixed signs on buildings would be natural material such as wood or natural stone. The typical material for a sandwich board is plastic, wood or chalkboard. There was also a question of whether signs had to be turned off at closing. Mr. Hopkins thought that internally lit signs could remain lit for safety reasons. The Planning Commission felt strongly that internally lit signs should be turned off at closing. Stephanie Jerome noted there are some businesses that have lights in their windows that shine on items and that is acceptable. Mr. Atherton stated if a business is closed, the lights should be off and if the business is open 24-hours per day, the sign could remain lighted. Mr. Hopkins also noted concern with the use of the word “city” and it was suggested the wording be changed to “town limits”. Mr. Atherton requested the Planning Commission provide a written response to Mr. Hopkins as the Select Board Chair for the Select Board’s consideration.

6. Energy Plan Update

Michael Shank reported the Energy Committee had a good first meeting. In terms of meetings, the Committee will meet on the first Monday of each month before the Planning Commission meeting. The agenda for the August meeting will include discussing a criteria list of what the Town wants renewable energy to look like, develop a list of preferred sites, develop energy workshops for the public, and discuss the development an education partnership with the local high school. Stephanie Jerome stated there is concern with the lack of institutional memory on the Committee and Mr. Shank noted where the Committee will struggle is in the development of a list of preferred sites.

7. Creative Economy Plan

Stephanie Jerome advised there is a movement by the Vermont Arts Council to include creative economy in the town plans to show there is as much economy generated through creative artists and businesses. They would like the creative businesses and venues mapped and incorporated in town plans. Ms. Jerome noted the Brandon Artist Guild would be a good source for developing a piece for the Town Plan. There is not a mandate to do this, but it is something to consider for the future. Michael Shank suggested this could be a project for a college student. Dave Atherton stated the Town Plan is a marketing tool and thought that information relating to creative economy could be helpful. Ms. Jerome stated this could potentially be a good marketing tool for the Economic Development Officer to use. Mr. Atherton suggested some of this information might be available through the census.

8. BLSG

Dave Atherton reported there has been a complaint regarding the pesticides being sprayed in the State by an organization at the Vermont Law School. The State approved the pesticides being used. The Select Board requested Mr. Atherton notify the Planning Commission regarding the information received from the attorney’s office. The Town is not a party to this, as it is not a municipal function, but the Town provides an appropriation. The Planning Commission does not need to take any action. Michael Shank advised he had received information from an acquaintance that does truck spraying in Rhode Island and he would be curious to explore some other options for spraying in the future. Stephanie Jerome suggested Mr. Shank connect his contact with the BLSG. Mr. Atherton and Mr. Rausenberger have discussed this item and it was noted the district is highly regulated by the State.

9. Old/New Business

Dave Atherton reported the Bakery is feeling they are losing business due to the construction project. The Select Board waived the sign ordinance for businesses in the downtown district during construction. Mr. Atherton suggested the Planning Commission advise the downtown businesses that they can place additional signs during the construction season. Mr. Atherton stated a business owners meeting will be scheduled. With regard to the political signs, Mr. Atherton reviewed the BLUO and the Town's ordinance indicates they can remain for 21 days, but the Secretary of State indicates 14 days. There has not been an official written complaint made, but this subject will likely be discussed at the next Select Board meeting. Mr. Atherton stated the Select Board would figure out what has to be upheld.

Stephanie Jerome requested an update on the Conti Solar project. Dave Atherton received a letter from the Public Utility Commission indicating they did not approve the site change. It is not certain if Conti Solar will be moving forward with the project due to the lack of outreach to the community. Mr. Atherton will contact Conti Solar to determine the status of the project. Ms. Jerome noted the Planning Commission will need to draft a letter outlining their concerns with the site for the approval process. Mr. Atherton noted there is a water main that runs through the project and there is not enough buffer in the project.

Ms. Jerome questioned when the Flood Hazard update is due. Mr. Atherton will obtain additional information on this subject and advise the Planning Commission. Mr. Jerome advised the River Corridor information would need to be incorporated into this section. Mr. Atherton will contact Barbara Pulling to clarify and also noted the Town has very good connections with Hazard Mitigation and he is certain they would assist the Town with updating this section. Mr. Atherton stated the Town may already have most of this information and possibly, only an update is required. Mr. Atherton suggested the new Zoning Administrator could go through training for flood plain management.

Michael Shank has had a discussion with Representative Shaw concerning the charging station planned for installation behind the Mobil Station. Jack Schneider, Energy Committee member, suggested the Town have a charging station in a more visible location. Dave Atherton advised the only concern with one on the street is the loss of a parking space due to the length of time for charging. Mr. Atherton stated the Town also owns the parking lot behind Café Provence.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, August 6, 2018 at 6PM – Brandon Town Hall – Planning Commission Meeting

11. Adjournment

The Committee Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:33PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary