



RUTLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

City Hall – 52 Washington St. – Rutland, VT 05701
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 969 – Rutland, VT 05702
Phone: 802-773-1800

Minutes October 11, 2017

Present: Susan Schreibman (SS), Patrick Griffin (PG), Larry Walter (LW) and Alvin Figiel (AF).

Also Present: Alderman Mattis, Tara Kelly, Bob Tanner, Lyle Jepson, Mary Cohen and Barbara Spaulding, recording secretary.

SS, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

I. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS – None.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT – Lyle Jepson invited the Commission to REDC's 80th Annual Meeting on November 2 at The Casella Theater at Castleton University.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –September 27, 2017.

Alderman Mattis asked to strike “unanimously” regarding the Aldermen’s vote to refer the Proposed Sign Ordinance to the Community & Economic Development Committee. AF moved to approve the minutes of September 27, 2017 with the amendment. LW seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS – None.

V. OLD BUSINESS – Sign Ordinance Presentation.

Introductions were made by everyone. SS said the presentation has been revamped based on previous feedback and Tara’s visit with South Burlington officials regarding their sign changes. SS explained that the Commission is looking for feedback and that the presentation is an informal discussion.

Tara said the presentation is built on two-years of work by the Planning Commission. PG added that the sign ordinance is 25 years old and the last update was done 10 years ago.

The following are comments made during the presentation.

AF said the greatest concern is the current ordinance allows for a 250 sq. ft. sign which is out of scale with the rest of Vermont. LW added that translates into a 10x25 ft. sign which is comparable to the end of a doublewide trailer.

Lyle talked about the balance between the cost of a sign and aesthetics.

LW discussed the new sign by The Butcher Shop on South Main Street and how the owner chose to set it lower than the McDonalds sign.

AF said urban areas more typically have internally illuminated signs and rural areas should feel different from shopping strips which are found all over the country. Part of the draw to Vermont is its landscape and different aesthetic.

There was discussion on allowing internally lit signs in the Downtown.

There was discussion regarding which would be fairer: grandfathering existing signs in perpetuity or amortization of signs over a 7-10 year period. The consensus appeared to be in favor of an amortization schedule.

Tara noted the proposed changes have not yet had legal review.

Tara said there is still a lot of public process that needs to be done.

Lyle asked if 6 ft. high pole signs were safe from vandals in the Historic District. Monument signs in that district, which are closer to the ground, do not appear to have been victimized.

Mary noted the goal for this region is to emulate progressive communities that attract and retain people.

Bob Tanner talked about allowing gas stations to use LED lights in their price signs.

Mary said she understands the “Don’t Jersey Vermont” concept but is concerned about the cost to change signs and the impact on the business community. Discussion continued regarding how often signs change and the cost for a local owner as opposed to a National Chain.

SS said the Commission expects there will be some push back but the proposed ordinance is the dream list.

Lyle said the proposed sign ordinance is in line with the Regional Marketing Initiative and he is in favor of amortization over a 7 year period.

Mary said the proposed changes impact Chamber members and she would like to get feedback from them. She would send out an email blast to educate members on the impact of the proposed changes and direct them to Bob to understand how the proposed ordinance would affect them.

Lyle suggested incentivizing the sign changes with a grant or seed money. He also suggested a public presentation.

The Commission embraced the idea of a “sign day” with several presentations scheduled to raise awareness and gather input. Discussion continued on what was needed prior to a public “Sign Day.” Data on how many signs would be affected and the cost of the

changes needs to be researched. Tara will work with Bob to research the data. LW volunteered to fill in any gaps.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE.

PG moved to receive and file the following correspondence. AF seconded. Motion was approved.

VT Dept. of Health, 9/2017, survey regarding tobacco, alcohol and marijuana policies.

VII. ADJOURN.

PG moved to adjourn. AF seconded. The meeting ended at 6:47 pm. The next meeting will be held November 8.

For the Commission:

Barbara Spaulding, Recording Secretary