



RUTLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

City Hall – 52 Washington St. – Rutland, VT 05701
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Meeting Minutes March 8, 2023

Present: Rebecca Mattis (RM), Sarah Roy (SR), Pat Griffin (PG) and Alvin Figiel (AF).

Also Present: Andrew Strniste Planning & Zoning Administrator, Barbara Spaulding recording secretary, Alderman-elect John McCann, Tyler Levoie, Mary Cohen, Kevin Loso, Sydney Carvajal and John Ruggiero.

Absent: David O'Brien

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

- I. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS** – RM suggested adding discussion of 133 Forest Street by Mary Cohen and Kevin Loso under Old Business.
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT** – None.
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 22, 2023.**

PG moved to approve the minutes of February 22, 2023. RM seconded. Motion was approved.

- IV. NEW BUSINESS** – None.

- V. OLD BUSINESS – 133 Forest Street – former Griswold Property.** Mary said she and Kevin are working on a project relating to a former Griswold Drive property, which was previously a masonry, located next to Stonegate. The project will continue the multi-family housing project at Hickory Street across the street to the subject property. The more units allowed for the project, the more economical the project and more responsive it would be regarding the housing crisis. Currently the site is zoned Industrial and she and Kevin could build as many units as they want, but they are at this meeting to ask the Commission to consider re-zoning the area from the proposed R7 to R5. This would allow for the development of a 4-story 30 unit building that will architecturally resemble the style of the Hickory Street buildings across the street. Mary distributed copies of a conceptual design of the development. SR asked how tall the Hickory Street buildings were, and Kevin replied they are 3-story, but designed to look like 2-stories. Mary said this project would include community space that would be shared with the Hickory Street residents. Kevin added that following Phase II of Hickory Street, demand for the community center was greater than anticipated. Currently there is a Head Start program on one side and Rutland Community Programs, a childcare center, on the other side. This leaves no space for the resident related activities. The new development will allow for the resident activities to resume. RM said Mary and Kevin are not alone in wanting the R5 designation in that area. SR would not be in favor of changing the whole area to R5 to benefit one development. SR asked if the Stonegate Association was still attached to the

Griswold Property. Both Mary and Kevin said it is not currently part of the Association, and would not be when developed. PG asked about the size of the properties in Stonegate to figure out whether or not that would be an R5 district. AF asked if the intention is to make the development similar to Stonegate within this footprint. Mary said not Stonegate, but Hickory Street. RM asked about the timeline for the project. Mary said the project is in the pre-development work, with some of that completed. The final stage is funding opportunities and the intention is to apply for 9% tax credits next February 2024 and if the credits are granted, work would start in April of 2024. Mary said the conceptual plan took into consideration the wetlands and associated buffer by siting the building footprint closer to the street with parking in the rear. Kevin said regardless of the timing of the new zoning bylaws being adopted, they wanted as a courtesy, to present what they have in mind for the property. Tyler, who is working with Kevin and Mary, said the R5 allows them to go up to 4 stories and up to 37 units, but they are only looking at 30 units. AF said he could see a 4-story building there and he agrees that the R5 designation could work in the area. RM was not ready to make a determination but appreciated the presentation. SR said the proposal is better than what is existing. Mary thanked the Commission for all their hard work on the new zoning.

Proposed Zoning Bylaws draft review – Discussion of use chart and review of zoning map.

Andrew recommended that the Commission consider including the area across from Regional Ambulance and behind Gilrain and Freeman Avenues in the POP District. Andrew said the area only has a small piece of wetlands. RM said she believed there were environmental issues in that area and it should remain residential. Andrew explained how there could be office type development in the area. SR said there are offices currently in that area. Andrew said there could be residences in the POP District. SR asked where the property would be accessed. AF discussed how a Planned Unit Development could work in the area and read from page 101 in the draft zoning. Andrew said uses are restricted in the PUD. He thinks this lot, if included in the POP District, could provide for more business opportunity while still allowing for large scale residential housing complexes within walking distance to the hospital, while not perpetuating the single-family residential housing. Andrew said the argument could be made that there is a natural progression of the POP District to Gilrain Avenue or close to it. PG mentioned there is a stream through the area. RM said she feels the need to look at the setbacks for the R5, R7 and R10 districts and doesn't feel confident making changes to the map until then. AF said with all the discussion of the need for more intense development, he thinks they need to be more flexible. He would like to ask Brandy to consider a series of regulations for these areas that would be tighter for more intense development. RM said she wants to preserve some neighborhoods as R10 because there are people who want to live in less dense neighborhoods, and she wants them to live in Rutland. She added that the tax base needs to be considered and the tax base is in the residential areas of the City. Andrew said there is going to be a City-wide reassessment of all City properties. There was discussion on whether every parcel needs to be developed.

John Ruggiero discussed why this area in particular has not been developed. He said Joe Giancola told him the best way to develop that property would be to access the property

from the Albert Cree parcel, and create buffers for the Sonja and Freeman Drive neighbors who are concerned with increased traffic. John added that he is in favor of a planned office park for that area. He advocated for clustered housing there similar to Country Grove Condos and removal of the R10 designation. There was discussion on how difficult it would be for the area to be developed in the current market and with the City's taxes if it stays R10. AF proposed the large parcel be designated POP and the Commission agreed.

Andrew suggested the Commission look at the area of Kingsley and Roberts Avenues currently designated as an R10 district surrounded by R5 and R7. RM wanted to address comments received from John McCann regarding avoiding pockets of zoning. She said previously the zoning map was comprised of spot zoning in various locations due to what existed in the area and this Commission is trying to be more visionary. She is not against having small pockets of zoning. SR said Brandy's proposal was based on lot size and parameters. Andrew said the difference between Kingsley and the Dana, Marble and Coolidge neighborhood is that this area (Kingsley & Roberts) is surrounded by a heavily developed area. AF said the area of Kingsley and Roberts Avenues looks just like his neighborhood on North Street, despite the larger lot sizes, and he doesn't see any reason why it wouldn't be designated R7. RM asked about the setback differences. Andrew referred to page 33 saying the difference in front setbacks are 20 vs 15 and sides are 15 vs 10. SR said R7 makes more sense for the area. Andrew said the Commission should consider more flexibility and densification of housing going forward. PG thinks the area should be R10 including North Street. Andrew said the Commission could change the setbacks in the residential districts with an estimated average being 5 ft from the property line. PG discussed lot coverage and how the lots on Kingsley are most likely 50% of the property. John McCann said he could understand why the area would be its own little pocket and why it should be left as R10, but if the Commission is deadlocked maybe the tiebreaker is which allows for more density. He agreed that 4 unit properties could be built better. Andrew said the building ordinances would come into play for multi-unit residences regarding the physical attributes of the building. RM said she would also come down on the side of densification in this particular area. AF proposed that the areas of Kingsley and Roberts Avenue will change from R10 to R7 and the Commission agreed.

Andrew asked the Commission to consider the areas of Pearl, Vernon and Baxter Streets. RM said she is not bothered with the R7 designation for those corridors. Andrew said he does not believe Pearl Street is a corridor because it is not a direct access to Downtown and it ends at Field Avenue. Andrew suggested that Pearl and Vernon be designated as R10. RM questioned making them non-conforming lots and suggested letting the brook be the dividing line. This would make everything north of Tenney Brook on Pearl Street R10. RM suggested making Baxter Street north of Walnut St R10. The Commission agreed.

*SR left the meeting.

Andrew asked the Commission if the Northeast neighborhood should be reclassified from R7 to R10 in light of there not being an easy way for pedestrians to get Downtown. RM

asked if that would be consistent with the lot sizes. Andrew said some would be and some not and there will be need for discussion regarding changing the setbacks to possibly 10 ft. Andrew added that the area is segmented by two major roads. PG asked the Commission to consider the properties south of Temple as having the potential to become more pedestrian friendly because Woodstock is a commercial corridor and walkable to those neighbors. RM said she does not see the area becoming denser, but what about the people living there now who might want to do something on their lot. Andrew said currently they can only have a single-family residence on their lot so any of the new zoning districts will be an improvement. There was discussion regarding whether a multi-unit application under conditional use can be rejected based on the character of the neighborhood. PG suggested revisiting this discussion at the next meeting. Andrew said the Commission should also discuss the Southwest area at the next meeting. AF asked if Andrew could print the maps on a smaller size. PG asked for a fresh copy of the use chart. Andrew said he will make those copies for everyone. He said Brandy will be attending the April 12 meeting.

- VI. CORRESPONDENCE** – RM moved to receive and file the following correspondence. AF seconded. PG said he wrote the Enman Kesselring letter, but feels he can vote to receive and file the correspondence. Motion was approved.

2/24/23 – VT District 1 Environmental Commission, Incomplete Application, additional information requested, 1R0736-7 Brixmor Property Group, Rutland City;

3/1/23 – VT District 1 Environmental Commission, Incomplete Application, additional information requested, 1R0540-4 275 North Main LLC Rutland City; and

3/7/23 – Enman Kesselring Consulting Engineers, additional information, 1R0540-4 275 North Main LLC Rutland City.

- VII. ADJOURN** – RM moved to adjourn. PG seconded. Motion was approved. The meeting ended at 6:57 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting is March 22 in the HUB CoWorks.

For the Commission: Barbara Spaulding, Recording Secretary