



RUTLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

City Hall – 52 Washington St. – Rutland, VT 05701
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Meeting Minutes April 12, 2023

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

Also Present: Brandy Saxton of PlaceSense, Andrew Strniste Planning & Zoning Administrator, Barbara Spaulding recording secretary, Alderman John McCann, Mayor Doenges, Sydney Carvajal and John Ruggiero.

Absent: David O'Brien

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

- I. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS** – Correspondence from John Ruggiero dated 4/11/23 was added to the agenda. Alderman McCann asked for a couple minutes at the end of the evening to discuss what he needs to bring back to the Board of Aldermen.
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT** – None.
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 22, 2023.**

RM moved to approve the minutes of March 22, 2023. SR seconded. Motion was approved.

- IV. NEW BUSINESS** – None.

- V. OLD BUSINESS – Proposed Zoning Bylaws draft review and timeline/schedule discussion with Brandy Saxton of PlaceSense.**

Introductions were made by the Commission and folks in the attendance. Brandy said this is a pre-kick off meeting to organize the scope and schedule of the project for the actual kick off meeting. She asked the Commission to express their vision and arc of the project so she could prepare a formal approach and recommend a schedule for moving forward. Brandy added that PlaceSense is now a two-person operation and she will introduce her partner Rod Francis at a future meeting in Rutland.

RM said she is hoping Brandy will assist the Planning Commission with the public engagement piece and finishing the use chart, in particular the uses that were deferred until Brandy was rehired. Those uses include Resource-based Uses, small scale retail and micro and mini industry. AF added that there have been significant changes to the work product that needs a review for consistency. RM said several residential districts were “repainted” and there needs to be a way to demonstrate the affect these setbacks and coverages will have in those districts.

Brandy said the public engagement piece will include neighborhood walking tours around the City to address the changes. In preparing for the tours there will be data

collection and charting of properties that are representative of the dimensional standards in the districts for a real world picture of what those numbers mean.

AF said design control districts, overlays and Architectural Review procedures have not been discussed and this needs to be addressed by the Planning Commission before going too much further. Andrew suggested having that discussion in up-coming meetings before bringing in Brandy. PG said the Commission has not touched on the meat and potatoes of the design controls and there is a lot there. Brandy suggested considering whether the Commission wants to have all the pieces of the zoning bylaws crafted before engaging the public for feedback, or if the districts and the map, which most people are interested in, are enough to move forward with some of the public engagement. She said the opportune moment to engage the public is between now and June and then picking up again in late summer to early September. Brandy said using summer events to get the community's attention is a possibility.

RM suggested rolling out the map and use chart soon while continuing to work on the design controls etc. as the most efficient use of time. The consensus of the Commission is to collect feedback regarding the map and use chart while working on the other pieces as suggested. Alderman McCann asked about the extent of the prior public engagement piece. RM explained that in addition to COVID, there were 3 new Commission members that needed to be brought up to speed which took 1 ½ years. Brandy added that there was also staff turnover. Alderman McCann discussed how doing the public engagement now could affect the broad brush of the bylaws. Brandy said the Commission is at the point of public engagement and beyond the vision. Brandy discussed doing a series of neighborhood meetings, walks or through organized groups to build awareness and collect feedback.

RM said the Aldermen are the policy makers and she questions whether it is the Commission who should make changes to the zoning based on the comments from the community. Andrew said the Commission should make changes based on the majority of the comments and let the Aldermen deal with individual changes. RM said she feels it is the Commission's job to collect the feedback, but it is ultimately up to the Aldermen to vote on controversies. SR said the Commission has already been looking at specific properties from individuals and made changes therefore setting a precedent. Andrew said those changes were made based on research to back up the changes.

Brandy said ideally the Commission should deliver to the Aldermen a document that is as ready to adopt as possible. All issues will not be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. She suggested creating a comment matrix that tracks all comments the Commission receives through an informal meeting and a hearing process. The matrix includes background on the comments and the outcome to show how the Commission moved forward and to deliver the matrix with the document to the Aldermen so they understand the conclusions.

RM asked how long the neighborhood meetings will take. Brandy said she would look to organize that over the summer months, but also use the Farmer's Market and other events to get people's attention. She said the meetings would be held in late August and September. Brandy said she can create a page that other websites could link to in May

and June. Brandy will put together an outreach approach for the Commission to review and use to network and put the word out. PG asked if there is prep work for the Commission. Brandy said most of the work is on her with some things for the Commission to review. The leg work will be done by Brandy and Andrew. SR asked if there will be a business walk? Brandy said the approach there would be different. It could be presenting to the Downtown organizations during their regular meetings. The business community will have different interests in the zoning than the residential community. Mayor Doenges said he will be pushing the conversation and marketing this from City hall and in the City's Master Plan to hopefully stir more interest. Alderman McCann said if there is going to be a digital reach there may be other groups, Next Door or Front Porch forum to can reach a broader audience. He also suggested partnering with Come Alive Outside for the walking tours. Brandy will put together a list of communication channels and a draft outreach strategy.

PG asked if it is feasible to have only a couple walking tours for this size community. Brandy said the walks wouldn't be through every neighborhood. The walks would be typical of the districts with built form similarities and that are characteristic of the district. Alderman McCann suggested a self-guided tour of example districts. SR suggested using GIS mapping for 24-hour tours.

RM asked about the Resource-based Uses. Brandy said she could address those uses now, but in regards to how things fit together, she suggested waiting to see where things stand at the end of the legislative session in May. There may be statutory changes that the Commission will need to respond to as well. Brandy said going forward she will put together the approach and strategy and there will be a kick-off meeting to go over them. Alderman McCann discussed making the zoning maps color-blind friendly. Brandy said there are conventions around zoning district maps pertaining to which colors to use.

Brandy explained that Farming or Forestry and on-farm business are defined by the State and permitted everywhere. In an urban setting, most communities don't list farming and forestry as an allowed use in all their business districts. It is more a question for the outlying districts where there still is active farmland. On-farm business is like a home occupation and are mostly agri-tourism businesses. There are a range of activities the State has defined. If the business grows and needs to import the value-added products, this is Agricultural Enterprise. Brandy said instead of permitting the agricultural uses in every district, the Commission could add language to the regulations regarding agricultural uses. PG suggested not listing the uses as permitted. Andrew agreed to add language in the regulations. RM asked if Agricultural Enterprise should be permitted where similar things are permitted like light industry or food and beverage manufacturing, mixed-use, and business corridor. Brandy said it should be permitted in the R10 district. Andrew said this is a way to distinguish food and beverage production facilities and Agricultural Enterprise by allowing it in the R10 district. PG and SR do not think it should be allowed in R10. RM asked if the Commission wants to allow Agricultural Fair considering the potential future development of the fairgrounds. PG asked if not allowing the use prohibits the fairgrounds from operating. Andrew said currently the fairgrounds is zoned Industrial and any change would increase the process. Brandy suggested considering other types of exhibition uses for the fairgrounds and she

will consider that during the consistency review. She said there is statute that protects Agricultural Fairs. PG suggested carving out an allowance for big events in the business corridor that has a large amount of land.

SR suggested discussing with Brandy how to delineate between Wal-Mart as a retail store and the 1,200 sq. ft. store across the street. Brandy discussed how communities make those breaks between retail sizes including convenience store size of up to 5,000 sq. ft., Dollar Store size from 8-12,000 sq. ft., grocery store size up to 30-50,000 sq. ft. depending on if it is multi-purpose, and big box stores from 50-100,000 sq. ft. PG suggested 4-5,000 sq. ft. for small in historic parts of the City and over 5,000 sq. ft. as large retail allowed in other districts. RM suggested further discussion as to where small and large retail stores.

Andrew told Brandy that the City is exempting short-term rentals with registration through GOV.os.

RM asked about utility facilities. Brandy said this use is on the list of uses on the off chance there is some sort of utility component that is not exempt due to its type, that needs to sit on its own lot, and can not be approved as an accessory structure.

Andrew said he will work with Brandy on an outline for public engagement and the Commission will finish the use chart at the next meeting followed by discussion of Architectural Review. Brandy said she will be back on May 24 to review materials she will submit to the Planning Commission.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE – SR moved to receive and take under consideration the following correspondence. RM seconded. Motion was approved.

4/7/2023 – John Kalish Esq., 16 Campbell Road, request to reclassify to R-5 with increase maximum building footprint of 20,000 sq. ft.; and

4/11/2023 – John Ruggiero, Property located east and west of Creek Road, Dorr Drive reclassified as R-5.

Alderman McCann said he will take to the Board that the Commission is planning for public involvement in August/September that will include walking tours, meetings and an online component. The Commission will work on design controls for the zoning.

VII. ADJOURN – RM moved to adjourn. SR seconded. Motion was approved. The meeting ended at 7:01 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting is April 26 in the HUB CoWorks.

For the Commission: Barbara Spaulding, Recording Secretary