

**Rutland City Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 24, 2023**

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

Also Present: Andrew Strniste Planning & Zoning Administrator, Barbara Spaulding recording secretary, Alderman McCann, *Mayor Doenges and John Ruggiero.

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

- I. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS** – PG asked to add discussion of the Kentucky Fried Chicken free standing sign to a future agenda. RM said she would like to include discussion of enforcement of the sign ordinance and asked that both topics be added to the June 14 agenda.
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT** – None.
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – May 10, 2023.**

AF moved to approve the minutes of May 10, 2023. SR seconded. Motion was approved 3-0 with 1 abstention.

*Mayor Doenges arrived.

- IV. NEW BUSINESS** - None.
- V. OLD BUSINESS – Discussion of Proposed Zoning Regulations.**

Andrew suggested that AF explain his proposed design control districts. AF said the proposed design control districts originated in 2004. He feels that design control should be applied to the most sensitive areas including the Downtown, Courthouse District, Route 7 from Vernon Street to the bottom of Gouger Hill and Woodstock Avenue from Route 7 to Beauchamp & O'Rourke. The areas north and south on Route 7 are less significant and would benefit from green strips, hedges to screen parking and the outlawing of franchise architecture. Alderman McCann asked how Rutland could be unique in regard to development. AF discussed the Starbucks projects as an example of how Rutland could be "unique" as opposed to settling for franchise architecture. AFA also said it is not truthful to mimic historic buildings, but developers should design buildings to complement the surrounding architecture. RM agreed that requiring setbacks, not allowing franchise architecture and design control would improve the "brutalist" architecture. AF said review of older buildings should involve professionals. He added that maximum setbacks could create a hardship on narrow lots, but there is an ability to combine lots.

Alderman McCann discussed creating a strode, which is a combination road and street to slow traffic and create an environment that is built less for cars and more for pedestrians, bicyclists and people in wheelchairs.

RM referred to page 67 in the proposed zoning 308.F Pedestrian Access. John Ruggiero discussed how the town of Manchester is an example of parking in the rear of commercial businesses, requiring entrances to the side or back of a building, and requiring pedestrian sidewalks to entrances. He believes that over time, these requirements, will work to transform the landscape of the intersection of Routes 4 and 7.

Andrew reminded the Commission that the DPW has sole discretion over the number of curb cuts and he is in favor of a driveway ordinance. Andrew said that DPW uses B71 Standards State Regulations in regard to curb cuts. PG said he would defer to DPW regarding the maximum curb cut width in the Downtown Historic District, but he suggested 24 ft. as typical as opposed to the 20ft. in AF's proposal. Alderman McCann asked how could a smaller curb cut be encouraged. RM said the Architectural Overlay in the design districts could enforce a narrower curb cut. AF said he strongly recommends prohibiting mirrored, reflective or heavily tinted glazing at street level or upper floor windows in the Downtown.

Andrew asked if the five proposed design control districts are still necessary. AF said the Downtown District (red) is definitely one and the other is the Green District from Vernon to the bottom of Gouger Hill and includes the Courthouse District and up to Beauchamp & O'Rourke on Woodstock Avenue. Andrew asked if there is a third district that would encompass orange and blue areas on the Design Control District map. AF said those districts would not require Architectural Review, but be controlled through the proposed zoning pictures in chapter 2. Andrew suggested that for homework, the Commission should go through the section with these 3 districts to determine what applies and what doesn't, knowing that District 3 would be Administrative Review. The three districts would be Downtown (red) Architectural Review Overlay, Historical Mixed Use (green) overlay and the orange/blue district as only Administrative Review. Andrew said he will incorporate AF's proposed Design Control District Map with the zoning map and exclude all other districts. RM asked if it will match up without having additional lines.

PG proposed that the previous gateway from West Rutland is more neighborhood than gateway. AF and RM agreed that the overlay should not apply there. PG also asked if Strongs Avenue, from Main Street to Downtown, should have Architectural Review as opposed to Administrative Review. RM asked if PG was proposing to add the overlay for Strongs Avenue and not change the zoning district, so as to create a hybrid. Andrew said he believes it is appropriate. He suggesting reviewing what AF and Brandy proposed for design review to determine the level of Architectural Review.

Alderman McCann asked about how parking fits into the current discussion. Andrew asked the Commission to explore whether they should implement parking regulations altogether. PG said they shouldn't. Andrew suggested having the parking conversation before he has compiled the overlay information and provided it to the Commission. PG asked for the next few meetings will the Commission be able to focus on the technical

pieces. Andrew said Brandy will be back for the next meeting. AF said Brandy will be revising the document as well. Andrew will also be updating the zoning from his notes as well.

RM suggested having a general discussion of parking. Alderman McCann said at a recent Parking Committee meeting the Mayor was asked to convene an ad hoc parking zone committee to discuss boundary zones and parking rates and it would be important to make sure the Commission's zoning regulations align with the committee's recommendations. Mayor Doenges said the location of EV chargers etc. and the focus is Downtown parking and the winter parking ban. The winter parking ban conversation started after Forest Street had curbs and greenbelt installed. A parking lane was added and the ban was suspended for that lane only and it went very well over the winter.

RM said the winter parking ban and residential parking minimums are related. She understands the argument regarding less auto-centric planning, but she is concerned about blight created by having excessive cars on a yard or in the greenbelt. Alderman McCann discussed the parking rules in Reno and how the requirements prohibited the blight described by RM, but also inhibited homeowners from investing in their properties. Andrew read the proposed zoning parking minimum requirements from page 83 (1) (a). He added that currently there are no parking regulations in the City's zoning. AF said he never saw a need for parking minimums adding that it is a personal responsibility. The consensus of the Commission was to remove parking minimum requirements from the proposed zoning. PG suggested encouraging the ad hoc parking committee to explore lifting the winter parking ban and enforce no parking in the greenbelt to destigmatize on-street parking and alleviate a parking problem. Alderman McCann clarified that the ad hoc parking committee is dealing with parking zones and rates for meters, but this issue could go to the Parking Committee or Traffic Safety Committee. He offered to take this issue to the full Board and ask it to be sent to the correct committee. Mayor Doenges said he believes the greenbelt issue is still in committee. RM asked Alderman McCann to find out what is the state of parking regulations and enforcement as it pertains to the Traffic Safety Committee and Aldermanic committees. Alderman McCann asked for procedural guidance. Andrew said under Reports from representatives he could summarize the Commission's position on parking and request an update regarding the greenbelt parking issues from Charter & Ordinance Committee, as well as, referral of the Winter Parking Ban to the Traffic Safety Committee.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE – AF moved to receive and file the following correspondence. SR seconded. Motion was approved.

5/12/23 – Act 250 Project Review Letter, JO 1-431, re: VT Farmers Food Center, Act 250 not required.

VII. ADJOURN – RM moved to adjourn. SR seconded. Motion was approved. The meeting ended at 7:02 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting is June 14 in the HUB CoWorks.

For the Commission: Barbara Spaulding, Recording Secretary