

PLANNING COMMISSION

PRELIMINARY MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

July 17, 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alan Couch, Chairman
Terry Carter

Alan Isaacson

Logan Nicoll

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Norm Vanasse

STAFF PRESENT:

Rose Goings

OTHERS PRESENT:

Elizabeth Bridgewater
Barbara Davis
Eileen Dunseith
Richard Dunseith

Aaron Galley
Jason Rasmussen
Ted Reeves
Robert Ross

Torin Tofferi
Ed Mc Eneaney-Okemo Valley TV
Lisha Klaiber, Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Alan Couch called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL BY RECORDING SECRETARY

- A. All Planning Commission members present, except Norm Vanasse.

3. CONSIDERATION OF ANY CHANGES, ADDITIONS OR REMOVALS TO THE AGENDA

- A. No changes were needed.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

- A. The minutes to be approved are from the meeting of June 19 2018.
B. **MOTION by Logan Nicoll and seconded by Alan Isaacson to approve the minutes June 19, 2018 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.**

5. COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

- A. There were none.

6. **COMMUNITY MEETING**

- A. Alan Couch said that this is the second meeting we have had like this and would like your feedback. He introduced Elizabeth Bridgewater.
- B. Elizabeth Bridgewater said that she represents the Windham-Windsor Housing Trust. The trust is in its 31st year, starting in Brattleboro to save 3 historic buildings and preserve the downtown character. Seven years ago, it merged with the Rockingham Area Housing Trust. We are in real estate development, acquiring and rehabilitating properties. We own 759 apartments and 3 mobile home parks and of these, 370 are self-managed. Stewart Properties manages Black River Overlook for us. We have 3 programs for homeowners:
- i. Housing Counseling and Education
 - ii. Shared Equity Program where we own the land, but the homeowner buys the house with deep subsidies. When the house is sold, the subsidy stays with the house. She added that there are none of these in Ludlow.
 - iii. Home Repair Program, which is a loan program that assists homeowners with repairs and energy efficiency measures. We provide the services of a rehabilitation specialist, who helps the owner, determine the scope of the project and locate contractors.
- Elizabeth Bridgewater continued, saying that there is a Strategic Plan Process in progress for now to the next 3 to 5 years. We are trying to increase our presence and impact in Windsor County by building awareness and an improved website. She is here to find out what the needs in Ludlow are and what are the barriers and issues.
- C. Terry Carter said people can't afford to live here.
- D. Alan Couch said that a number of the homes in Ludlow are 2nd homes because they appear to be bargains to out of state buyers.
- E. Elizabeth Bridgewater asked if the number of 2nd homes drives up the rental costs.
- F. Alan Couch said in general.
- G. Terry Carter said that there are no young families and the High School will be closing.
- H. Logan Nicoll asked what can be done to curb this trend and what can the Planning Commission write into the town plan to help this.
- I. Ted Reeves said that seasonal help are finding it difficult to find seasonal rentals because many of the home owners are turning to Air B&B and other such companies to get more money. It has become an obstacle for Okemo because we can't get seasonal rentals for our staff.
- J. Elizabeth Bridgewater asked what the income range is.
- K. Ted Reeves said it depends on skill level; higher skill level would be \$15 to \$20 per hour. People accept the positions and then can't find reasonable places to live, so don't take the job.
- L. Elizabeth Bridgewater asked where they stay.
- M. Ted Reeves said it depends if they are just seasonal or someone we might want to keep. He said that the resort is part of the housing issue.
- N. Terry Carter said that some of the 2nd home owners have retired and moved here.
- O. Alan Isaacson asked how the trust deals with jobs.
- P. Elizabeth Bridgewater said the trust doesn't deal with economic development or job placement.
- Q. Alan Isaacson said young people don't have places to start out. He said that retirees buy the homes as ski houses and then move here. It's a problem for the schools because there are no affordable homes for young families. He added that the state has forced us to reduce our school budget. He asked how we reverse this.
- R. Ted Reeves said that the state of Vermont, as a whole, is aging. It's hard to get a broader employment base. Ludlow is an example of what's happening throughout the state.
- S. Torin Tofferi said that a lot of the seasonal employees become year round residents, but can't find single family homes and there is also a shortage of apartments.

- T. Elizabeth Bridgewater asked if there are any landlords who are not interested in Air B7B and want longer term leases that may need some support.
- U. Alan Couch said that there are 2 problems with that:
- i. Can we find landlords who will take the risk and would they be available for your services
 - ii. Would the trust purchase properties in Ludlow and make them available to young people.
- V. Alan Isaacson asked where the trust gets its funding.
- W. Elizabeth Bridgewater said it is a private equity partnership. They get some soft loans from the state. She said that one of the challenges that they face is that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the renters in our area are eligible to rent from us and don't know it. We have some beautiful apartments and they are well maintained. We are trying to change peoples' perceptions.
- X. Terry Carter asked the income range for their apartments.
- Y. Elizabeth Bridgewater said it varies by apartments – some 80% of the median income and some 125% of the median income, based on the needs of the community. They also have 22 apartments for the homeless in Brattleboro.
- Z. Torin Tofferi asked if there are any programs for seasonal rentals.
- AA. Elizabeth Bridgewater said no. She asked where the seasonal employees go in the summer.
- BB. Ted Reeves said the younger ones, high school or college, stay here. We try to find positions for the seasonals we would like to keep. The winter to summer seasonal employment ratio is about 2 to 1.
- CC. Elizabeth Bridgewater said there are no real subsidies for seasonal housing.
- DD. Torin Tofferi said that they hire some of the seasonals from the summer resorts as winter seasonals here. Some stay and are trying to buy homes.
- EE. Elizabeth Bridgewater asked if there are any low-priced houses available.
- FF. Aaron Galley said low priced in Ludlow is \$220,000 to \$240,000.
- GG. Elizabeth Bridgewater said that the trust doesn't have any Home Repair Program projects in Ludlow. She said that the government is pushing to get buildings repaired.
- HH. Alan Couch said that is because of general ignorance of your services.
- II. Logan Nicoll said information about the trust's services could be put in the town plan.
- JJ. Elizabeth Bridgewater said they are trying to make their marketing more user friendly. She asked that if anyone knows of property or land available, to please let her know. She is not sure the trust can get traction in Ludlow without landlord support.
- KK. Torin Tofferi said that some people don't want to sign year leases.
- LL. Alan Isaacson suggested that Elizabeth Bridgewater attend a Rotary meeting as it may be a good source of contacts.
- MM. Ted Reeves said that Okemo is constantly, internally discussing the housing shortage for seasonal employees and most ski and resort areas are having the same problem.
- NN. Richard Dunseith asked if the trust works with realtors.
- OO. Elizabeth Bridgewater said sometimes, but there is not much presence here.
- PP. Eileen Dunseith suggested that the trust go to the local churches, Black River Good Neighbor and Gill Home.
- QQ. Elizabeth Bridgewater said they are building a "Lunch and Learn" program with presentations.
- RR. Alan Isaacson suggested they contact Jeld-Wen, Mack Molding and Peter LaBelle from Black River Good Neighbors.
- SS. Elizabeth Bridgewater said that she had met with Peter LaBelle today.
- TT. Terry Carter said that the state government is offering \$10,000 for young people to move here and she wishes they would offer it to young people to stay here.
- UU. Ted Reeves said that Okemo tried to use the existing real estate market for assistance for seasonal housing, but it falls back onto Okemo.

- VV. Alan Isaacson cautioned Elizabeth Bridgewater to be careful how they market the housing. Affordable housing is not Section 8 housing.
- WW. Elizabeth Bridgewater said the trust is very excited about their website and it speaks for itself. She said that the state of Vermont really cares about the character of the community.
- XX. Alan Couch thanked Elizabeth Bridgewater for coming.
- YY. Elizabeth Bridgewater said she would leave some material.
- ZZ. Alan Isaacson asked Barbara Davis to put it in town hall. He said we need to keep the town viable and turn the trend around.
- AAA. Alan Couch said we need community participation.
- BBB. Alan Couch said this board tries to develop the town plan relevant to years down the road. He said that at one time, the Planning Commission had 7 members, now it has 5.
- CCC. Robert Ross said that Ludlow has a declining population and declining school enrollment and needs better internet connections.
- DDD. Terry Carter said we need fiber-optics.
- EEE. Logan Nicoll said that there is a new program in the state for Telecom Committees, but they cannot use taxpayer money and compete with existing service providers.
- FFF. Alan Isaacson said we would have to put up our own poles and wires.
- GGG. Logan Nicoll said that it has to be done jointly with other towns and Cavendish is on the fence. There is not real reason not to, but no real purpose.
- HHH. Terry Carter said it would be very expensive for her to get Comcast.
- III. Jason Rasmussen said that Pittsfield has fiber-optics and broadband with a group of towns. He said that state funding is out there and that Cavendish is trying to get TDS to get that funding.
- JJJ. Logan Nicoll said they can't have a Telecommunications Committee and work with TDS and TDS is not looking to increase its service.
- KKK. Alan Couch said that the need for better telecommunications is in the town plan.
- LLL. Alan Isaacson said that VTEL pulled fiber-optic cable all around Ludlow, but not here.
- MMM. Logan Nicoll said that the purpose of the Telecommunications Committee is to provide telecommunications to that "last mile."
- NNN. Richard Dunseith suggested a business Round Table geared toward seasonal employment to share ideas.
- OOO. Alan Isaacson said that economic development and housing go hand in hand.
- PPP. Jason Rasmussen said that Bob Flint is a contact. He said that Cavendish is frustrated because it is hard to get what they want and have reached out to Ludlow and Weathersfield.
- QQQ. Alan Isaacson said it would be worth supporting.
- RRR. Aaron Galley suggested a "Locals Discount Club" from businesses for year-round residents for a small fee. He said they did it where he used to live and can provide contacts.
- SSS. Richard Dunseith suggested that the Chamber of Commerce might organize something for the locals.

7. AUGUST MEETING

- A. Alan Isaacson said that he is not available on August 21st. He said that Jason Rasmussen would be able to use the projector. He asked if the board wanted to change the meeting to the 14th or 28th.
- B. Barbara Davis said that Rose Goings will not be available on the 14th.
- C. Board consensus is that they have a lot of work to do.
- D. Terry Carter said she is available on the 14th and asked Jason Rasmussen if he would be available.
- E. Jason Rasmussen said yes.
- F. Next meeting August 14, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

8. **OTHER BUSINESS**

- A. Drive-ins, Drive-ups and Drive-throughs.
- i. Terry Carter asked for opinions on drive-ins, drive-throughs and drive-ups.
 - ii. Logan Nicoll said that in a recent DRB hearing, Ludlow Pharmacy requested permit to build a drive up for the pharmacy. It was denied by the DRB because of the language in the zoning regulations. The lawyers for the applicants presented their case and the town settled. The question is do we want to exclude these in the future.
 - iii. Alan Isaacson explained that at the time the regulations were written, it was to keep Mac Donald's and Wendy's out. The Town voted against fast food restaurants. He said that the language in the zoning regulations was foggy at best. The Select board and Trustees want us to clean up the language. At the time written, the regulations should only have excluded fast food restaurants. Do we want to put in the zoning: No Drive-ups, Drive-ins or Drive-throughs? That would mean no additional bank or pharmacy drive-ups.
 - iv. Logan Nicoll said that at their meetings, the Trustees had a split vote and the Select Board was unsure.
 - v. Terry Carter said that the Select Board will be holding an open hearing on August 6th.
 - vi. Alan Isaacson suggested they only be allowed in the Industrial District (near Jeld-Wen and LaValleys.)
 - vii. Robert Ross commented about traffic safety issues.
 - viii. Terry Carter suggested cleaning up the definition of "professional service."
 - ix. Aaron Galley said to say "no retail service."

9. **ADJOURN**

- A. **MOTION by Alan Isaacson and seconded by Terry Carter to adjourn this meeting. Motion passed unanimously.**
- B. Meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisha Klaiber

Alan Couch, Chairman

Logan Nicoll

Terry Carter

Norman Vanasse

Alan Isaacson