

Ludlow Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes: Regular Meeting
August 20th, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Regular Meeting

I. Call to Order:

The Regular Meeting of the Ludlow Planning Commission was called to order on Tuesday, August 20th, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the Ludlow Town Hall in Heald Auditorium by Theresa Gurdak-Carter.

II. Roll Call by Secretary:

Board:

Theresa Gurdak-Carter,
Jean Strong,
Ted Stryhas.

Board Absent:

Judith Pulinen
Ryan Silvestri

Recording Secretary:

Abigail Childs

Public:

Eric Alden,
Scott Baitz,
Noah Schmidt,
Jason Rasmussen,
Melissa Rockhill.

III. Considerations of any Changes, Additions, or Removal to the Agenda

1. N/A

IV. Comments from Citizens

1. N/A

V. Approval of Minutes

1. July 16th, 2024
 - a. #6 on #9 - Reverse the 30% and 50% there for commercial and residential
 - b. #7 - Ryan is spelled wrong "Ryna"
 - c. X - 2a. Add: and parallel roads in the town
 - d. Ted Silvestr - fixi last name.
 - e. **Terry Carter motions to approve the minutes of July 16th, 2024 as amended. Seconded by Jean Strong. All approved. Motion passed.**

VI. Rules of Procedure

1. Cannot proceed today, Ryan Silvestri and Judy Pullinen are missing.

VII. Section 220 or Town Zoning: Interior Alterations

1. Terry Carter says that Ryan Silvestri asked us to consider it because we changed village zoning verbiage with a paragraph at the end with legal use from Chris Callaghan, the town lawyer, and the Trustees are on board with it... so Ryan wants us to add it.
2. Carter says when we consolidate, there will be one document, but she suggests getting a Word copy from Jason Rasmussen at Regional and if it's ok with everybody, the only thing that changed was the first paragraph when we redid it in the village zoning document and the ending, so she would like to make those same changes that they made to village zoning so that it would be the same for town zoning.
3. The town zoning is from 2015, so it's needed.
4. Ted Stryhas and Jean Strong think that is a good idea. Terry Carter will bring it up at the next meeting.

VIII. Trustees Public Hearing on September 3rd

1. Terry Carter invites anyone to come to the Trustees meeting on September 3rd.
2. Carter says that Chris Callaghan, the town lawyer, said we have to have another public hearing because of the changes we've made to zoning. Carter asks to have people let her know if they can come so that she can warn them. Carter says they won't be making any decision so she may not have to warn it.

IX. Regional Planning Housing Study and Neighborhood Development Areas

1. Jason Rasmussen joins us via Zoom. He is helping us secure a grant.
2. Regional did a housing study and Rasmussen wants to meet with all 3 boards to find out how it pertains to Ludlow.
3. Rasmussen says the regional commission put in a grant to help with a neighborhood development area for Ludlow and Springfield and was awarded the money. Generally speaking, they are supposed to help with an application and reviewing to see if we are ready aka "municipal readiness" and so he wants to dig deeper and go through the details of what eligibility is for designation and go over the town plan and zoning. If not, it will identify potential changes that might be needed and can talk more in detail about what they find. In an ideal world, we would be eligible and pull together an application. If changes are needed, the grant won't pay for it, but there may be other ways to pay for it. He will start with the review and he will come back to the board fairly soon with his findings.
4. Rasmussen backs up and says the state of Vermont has designation programs; the downtown and village center designations, and a few others. This piece is fairly new. It's the core area of the village and gives the town bonus points for certain grant applications and more importantly, a few other tools such as tax credits so property owners in the area can get tax credits and can help pay for property improvements. It's geared toward housing, so it does similar things as bonus points for grants, but it gives housing developers of certain types the ability to access affordable housing funding, which would be good. There's regulatory relief, so if you get the neighborhood designation, people would have a harder time appealing the character standard, which is intended to help housing out, and some ACT250 exemptions.
5. Rasmussen says we may want to consider doing this for those reasons.
6. Terry Carter says Logan is the one who mentioned looking at it because other towns have it, there's money there, so why not? Rasmussen says there are only about 15 towns that have this

designation right now. For now, he can look into it, see what we have in place, and what we might have to change to move forward. Then, he can prepare the application.

7. Terry Carter said all boards have to approve it, but she thinks Rasmussen said it would mostly be in the village.
8. Rasmussen says we would need both Trustees and Selectboard on board to comply. He said they will start looking at the map, and draw ¼ mile boundary around the village center area and determine where sidewalks are, sewer, water, new development areas, etc.
9. Jean Strong says she is in favor of the study, and Ted Stryhas confirms.
10. Noah Schmidt asks Rasmussen if there is anything else that would be a negative for going into these neighborhood areas, rather than the character piece. Rasmussen says he doesn't think so, and he says some people may see the requirements as negative because you'll need certain things in your zoning.
11. Terry Carter said she is trying to get this on the Selectboard and Trustees agenda with the housing study. Noah Schmidt said he is looking forward to it. Schmidt says he will mention it to Brendan.
12. Eric Alden asks if it is possible to see the study before the meeting so that they can ask questions. Rasmussen says maybe... there are two studies they are doing and the online version is not accessible at the moment, but will be once it is fixed and can be viewed. There's another local Ludlow housing study that they are working on and at the moment is not available because they are still working on it; data and problem-solving are the last two pieces to complete it, and figure out what tools are available to help Ludlow.
13. Terry Carter asks Rasmussen what their goal should be next... she took a look at the town planning and zoning online and they are both from 2015-2016 and any updates pertain to COVID updates. She asks what the next direction should be since the town zoning hasn't been updated but the village has. Brendan said he would want to talk to the Selectboard about it too. Rasmussen says he thinks the last update to the town plan was in 2019 and is good until 2027. Rasmussen asks what the pressing issues are and suggests doing a supplemental study, and we could update to the town zoning and look at the town plan again. Maybe the Planning Commission wants to focus more on housing... and the Cavendish Planning Commission is looking at this for example... help us find where we can put housing in Ludlow.

X. Next Month's Agenda Planning

1. Town Zoning, 2016
2. Neighborhood Development Areas: hopefully after the Trustees and Selectboard meet and review our eligibility.

XI. Other Business

1. Board Member Comments: N/A
2. Citizen Comments
 - a. Terry Carter tells Scott Baitz she appreciates his attendance at the meetings.
 - b. Melissa Rockhill says she would be very interested in a housing study, and since a lot of her work has been about flood recovery, she hopes to see options for residents during floods. She says a lot of folks don't take buyouts because there is nowhere to go and they want to stay in the community they love.
 - c. Eric Alden says he is always happy to talk about housing, and it's no surprise it's the biggest topic in most neighborhoods. This would be a great goal, if not the only goal, to work on housing, workforce housing, and affordable housing. The biggest key to affordable housing is density, so just something to think about. Terry Carter says the new

state regulations will be covered in the Trustees meeting, and hopefully, there will be new approvals next meeting. Affordable housing can build 40% more and they can add an additional floor if the flood marshal says it OK.

- d. Noah Schmidt says the future of housing is a big topic and could be worth chatting with the DRB... he says they spend a lot of time developing housing in certain areas, but the things we do want to encourage get lumped into there and then get difficult for people to do things that we are looking for. DRB was such a slog for people with flood damages, specifically, and he wonders if there are ways to craft it so that they don't have to go through the DRB to move things forward and promote housing by building it into the things we are working on now.
- e. Terry Carter says Logan got her in touch with Kelly and Kyle from FEMA and she met with them along with Brendan McNamara. Brendan says they haven't gotten any money at all and it's been stalled and we are in debt 3 to 4 million dollars. FEMA decided to do a full scoping of the river to find places where more water could accumulate and let the river meander more.
- f. Melissa Rockhill asks if it's the "River Project" and Terry said it's replacing a culvert. Rockhill said it is about buyouts and restoration, and she knows they were looking at people for the buyouts like The Mill, restaurants, and doing floodplain restoration and she assumes they will do a study with the recommendations and let us know what the impact has. Terry Carter says redoing the whole plan will affect Cavendish more. Rockhill says Plymouth is also participating in the River Project and their changes would impact Ludlow. There is talk about area along 103 leading into town where maybe the state can elevate the road and allow for floodplain restoration with property owners. Carter suggests a floodplain dam between Plymouth to Ludlow. Rockhill is concerned about the number of surfaces we will have when the lot coverage changes because our stormwater drainage systems can't support the development we've already done, so she would like to see us as a town have a stormwater management plan and every time we get more development we reassess if we have to upgrade.
- g. Eric Alden says the stormwater plan is mandatory for development anyway.
- h. Jean Strong would like to see the sidewalks addressed, specifically the right-hand side after going through the stoplight in front of Dunkin Donuts with no sidewalk at all, and before that, there is not a designated sidewalk, and feels it is a dangerous area. She can't believe that in the permitting for Dunkin Donuts that there wasn't a sidewalk there - she believes the sign was put where the sidewalk was supposed to be, so it may be a signage issue. She wants to know where it falls. Terry Carter said on the survey, people wanted more sidewalks and it sounds like an area that is definitely needed.

XII. Adjourn

1. Terry Carter motions to adjourn. Jean Strong seconds. All approved. Motion passed.
2. The Planning Commission Regular Meeting was adjourned at **6:31 p.m.** on Tuesday, August 20th, 2024 by Terry Gurdak-Carter.

Minutes submitted by: Abigail Childs

Minutes approved by: