

Norwich PC Minutes -7/25/23

Members Present: Ernie Ciccotelli, Vince Crow, Jeff Goodrich, Stuart Richards, Jaan Laaspere, Kris Clement

Public: Mary Albert, Rob Gere

Meeting Opened: 6:33 pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Richards moved, seconded by Ciccotelli, to approve the agenda.

Motion carried 6-0

2. Public Comment for items not on the agenda

No Public comment for items on the agenda

3. Correspondence

AHSC will send a memo to the SB to get a sense of the support for the project on New Boston Rd

4. Planning Commission work plan – Priorities and process

Laaspere stated that the quote in the packet from TRORC is only an example of services that they could provide, not an actual proposal.

Goodrich stated that the SB is the authority that approves the town plan, zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations and that it is the PC's responsibility to develop those three items before they are reviewed by the SB.

Richards stated that revising the town plan should be the PC's first step and that parts of the town plan are highly contentious among some citizens of the town. He expressed concerns over past proposed developments regarding the high density of the plans.

Goodrich stated that, despite any problems, the town plan still exists and that it is the PC's obligation to follow it. He recommended choosing parts of the town plan and creating a subcommittee to revise those sections.

Ciccotelli stated that the town plan is flawed and does not represent the opinion of the town, and that it is not practical or specific enough in its recommendations. He also stated that he believes the town plan should be revised and that there is no mandate that prevents a revision at this time.

Clement stated that there are aspects and maps in the Town Plan that are drafts and those should be made official.

Goodrich stated that that process would need to go through the SB, the RPC and the public.

Laaspere discussed the enhanced energy plan designation stating that an application would need to be approved by the RPC then it would give the town more specific and legal standing on issues that affect solar siting.

Laaspere stated that the PC needs to determine the parts of the Town Plan that need to be addressed and then decide what to change.

Richards stated that the energy portion of the town plan needs to be reexamined. He also stated that density is an important factor of new development as well as location. He referenced two surveys that stated that more than 50% of respondents like the current town population and would like it to stay about the same as it is or decrease.

Clement stated that ridgeline protection and the definition of scenic roads need to be reevaluated.

Goodrich stated that the location of future development is a macro topic to reevaluate, as well as the topic of a potential sewer study, the Community Rating System and solar siting.

Ciccotelli stated that sustainability is the main thing to focus on and that things will flow down from that. He also stated that despite efforts to address sustainability in the town plan since it is currently not part of the town plan.

Goodrich stated that PC should reengage with town volunteers to help with revisions.

Clement stated that the language and specificity of the documents should be updated (e.g., "shall" to be changed to "must").

Ciccotelli stated that the subdivision regulations are filled with contradictory regulations and should be addressed.

Clement stated the PC should look into the budget allocated for TRORC consultation and suggested that the salary of the unfilled ZA position could be used if possible.

Consensus was met that the Chair is empowered to investigate the PC budgets and potential planning grants.

Clement stated that there could be a concern that the TRORC would look at the topics from a regional view, not a view reflecting Norwich.

Goodrich stated that in his experience the TRORC has never been disproportionately pro-development and its role is to follow and uphold the law. He also stated that this would be exclusively an advisory role only.

Richards stated that in his experience the TRORC has been pro-development but there is no harm hearing out the recommendations.

Goodrich stated the PC should first decide the areas that need to be addressed before seeking outside consultation.

Laaspere stated that the PC should ask other town committees for input on the topics to work on.

5. Planning Commission staff – Job Description and hiring process

Goodrich stated that the posted job description does not accurately reflect the job. He stated that staff should serve the PC, DRB and applicant.

Ciccotelli stated that the title should be Zoning Administrator because Norwich is not an urban municipality. He also stated that the ZA offers assistance to the PC and that the town manager does not supersede the recommendations of the PC.

Consensus was met to have Goodrich and Ciccotelli develop a revised job description for the open position and to have it included in the packet for the next PC meeting.

Richards stated he would like to add an agenda item for the next meeting to address the application of a solar project.

6. Planning and zoning files.

Laaspere stated that he is looking into locating and providing access to the planning and zoning files of the previous town manager.

7. Approve minutes

Clement moved, seconded by Richards, to approve the minutes from 6/27/22

Motion passed 6-0

Goodrich moved, seconded by Clement, to approve the minutes from 7/11/22

Motion passed 6-0

8. Public comment

Rob Gere stated that the PC should reengage with SB and evaluate the recent actions taken to hire new staff.

9. Adjourn

Goodrich moved, seconded by Richards, to adjourn the meeting at 8:52pm

Motion passed 6-0

APPROVED 08-08-2023