

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 15, 2005

Tracy Hall - Conference Room

Members Present: Daniel Johnson (Chair), Ralph Hybels, Lynn McGrew, Jeffrey Mathias, Douglas Hoffman, Adele Fulton, Alison McRee, Stuart Richards

Member Absent: Jaye Pershing-Johnson

Staff Present: Philip Dechert

Public Present: Alison May, Gerard Chapdelaine

Meeting convened at 6:40pm.

1. Approve Agenda. - There was discussion of re-arranging the agenda. D. Hoffman suggested and there was consensus to add review of Phil Dechert to agenda as new business. J. Mathias suggested and there was consensus to move survey discussion to be item 4 so we would be sure to work on it tonight. There was consensus to defer all discussion of zoning until the next meeting. J. Mathias moved (L. McGrew second) to hold an additional meeting on June 29, 2005: All voted in favor except A. Fulton, who abstained. L. McGrew agreed to reserve a room for the meeting.

Action: J. Mathias moved to accept the agenda as amended (A. Fulton second): Unanimously approved.

2. Comments from the Public. - None.

3. Announcements & Correspondence. - J. Mathias noted that he had forwarded to all members a copy of correspondence from Watt Alexander (Development Review Board Chair) to the members of the Selectboard, the town manager, and the chairs of the Conservation Commission and the Planning Commission. This correspondence regards changes to laws governing municipal planning and permitting recently passed by the Vermont Legislature.

P. Dechert noted that he will be out of office from June 16 to July 5.

S. Richards and P. Dechert reported that they were unavailable to go to a recent seminar on officers at the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT). G. Chapdelaine said he had been able to go and will report on it at the next Selectboard meeting.

4. Survey – Continue Review of latest drafts. S. Richards asked R. Hybels to confirm that he will print the color pages on his printer. R. Hybels confirmed, with the understanding that a document would be provided to him as proof that it was a charitable contribution for tax purposes.

Action: J. Mathias moved to approve Q5, with adjustment recommended by R. Hybels so the “It’s staying about the same” answer will appear as the middle category (A. McRee second): Passed unanimous.

Action: S. Richards moved to approve Q6, with a friendly amendment to drop the “Not at all”

category (A. McRee second). R. Hybels, A. Fulton, and J. Mathias argued that this was an expendable question. Motion failed 4-4-0 (For: S. Richards, J. Mathias, D. Hoffman, L. McGrew; Against: R. Hybels, A. McRee, A. Fulton, D. Johnson). Item will be dropped from survey.

Action: All agreed that Q7 is confusing as drafted. R. Hybels moved to drop it from survey but to work into the other questions something about zones and the concept of clustered versus scattered development (A. McRee second). Passed 7-0-1 (L. McGrew abstained).

Action: J. Mathias moved to accept Q8, with understanding that D. Hoffman will re-write it so the wording of column headings is “Encourage (rural);” “Encourage (village);” “Discourage (rural);” etc. (D. Hoffman second). Passed 7-0-1 (L. McGrew abstained).

Action: There was consensus to drop mobile homes from Q8, since by statute they must be allowed. J. Mathias moved to change language to “A. Apartments in existing buildings;” “B. More than one apartment in existing buildings;” “C. ‘Clusters’ of single-family houses, close to one another, with common open space;” “D. Attached townhouses;” “E. Duplexes;” “F. Multi-unit (3 or more) housing;” “G. Single family houses on standard-sized individual lots;” “H. Mixed residential and commercial buildings;” “I. Apartment houses” (D. Hoffman second). Passed unanimously.

Action: D. Hoffman moved to approve Q9, with change so question reads “35 feet (or 3 stories)” (J. Mathias second). Passed 7-0-1 (R. Hybels abstained).

Action: There was unanimous consent to list Q10’s answers in order so they move from one extreme to the other and to add “check one” under each column heading.

Action: J. Mathias moved to approve Q11 with friendly amendment to change from “number of commercial properties” to “amount of commercial and business activity” and to move “remain relatively stable” to serve as the middle category (S. Richards second). Passed unanimously.

Action: J. Mathias moved to approve Q12 (S. Richards second). A. Fulton proposed an amendment to change from “the Rural Residential zoning district” to “a Rural Residential zoning district.” (J. Mathias second) Amendment passed 7-1-0 (S. Richards against). Original motion passed as amended 7-1-0 (S. Richards against).

Action: R. Hybels moved to ask D. Hoffman to re-draft Q13 and Q14 as a single combined question (J. Mathias second). Passed unanimously.

Action: J. Mathias suggested a number of categories to add to Q15. R. Hybels asked him to bring a printout for all of us to consider at the next meeting. A. Fulton suggested having a second, similar question regarding the respondents’ desires for the town in general. She also said that the questions should not distinguish between types of ownership. S. Richards moved to retain the current Q15 and ask members to bring printed suggested new language to the next meeting (J. Mathias second). Passed unanimously. A. Fulton moved to add similar question regarding the town in general (J. Mathias second). Passed unanimously.

Action: J. Mathias moved to approve Q16 with change to replace “commercial zone” with “Norwich” (S. Richards second). Following discussion, J. Mathias withdrew original motion and instead proposed that Q16’s content be integrated into Q15 and the new question on the town in general (second concurred) . Unanimously approved.

Action: S. Richards moved to restore question specifically focused on municipal sewer that had appeared in earlier drafts (no second).

Action: R. Hybels moved to strike Q17 (A. Fulton second). D. Hoffman expressed agreement with motion. S. Richards suggested changing language to not name specific numbers of units. R. Hybels amended motion to have question changed to “How much affordable housing should be built in the next several years?” with response categories “None, Some, A lot.” Unanimously approved.

Action: S. Richards requested that R. Hybels provide to the Commission a definition of affordable housing in terms of income ranges to place in parentheses in Q17. R. Hybels agreed, and the proposal was approved by unanimous consent.

Action: J. Mathias moved to strike Q18 (no second). D. Hoffman moved to approve Q18 (S. Richards second). Approved unanimously.

Action: D. Hoffman moved to approve Q19 (D. Johnson second) with the following changes: replace “zone” with “areas;” add “mixed use” answer; drop the word “the” from “In the Rural Residential;” same for “In the Commercial;” remove “In the business use.” Motion passed 7-1-0 (J. Mathias against).

Action: J. Mathias moved to approve Q20 (D. Hoffman second). Motion passed 7-1-1 (L. McGrew against; A. McRee abstained).

Action: J. Mathias moved to accept Q21 after removing the “Other” option (D. Hoffman second). R. Hybels and A. Fulton offered friendly amendments to change to “To what extent do you support the creation of small village-like centers with higher density housing and some businesses and commercial uses, located away from the existing village?” and to have 5-point range of options from “not at all” to “a lot.” Friendly amendments accepted. Passed unanimous.

Action: J. Mathias moved to drop Q22 (D. Hoffman second). Unanimously approved.

Action: D. Hoffman moved to approve Q23 with addition of a “none” option and changing of “hotels” to “inns” and “12A” not “12” and addition of “community center” as an item (A. Fulton second). Passed unanimously. All agreed that more fine tuning of the response items will be needed.

Action: L. McGrew moved to strike Q24 (D. Hoffman second). Unanimously approved.

Action: A. Fulton moved moving Q25 to come directly after Q21. (Second ???) Passed 7-0-1 (J.

Mathias abstaining.)

Action: R. Hybels suggested and there was unanimous consent to devote the next meeting (6/29) to the survey.

5. *Zoning Regulation Revisions.* - Discussion postponed.

6. *Old Business.* - Discussion postponed.

7. *New Business.* - There was agreement to address P. Dechert's review at the meeting on June 29 as well as the survey. D. Hoffman raised question of whether we will be reviewing Mr. Dechert in executive session as a personnel matter. A. Fulton said we won't be reviewing him as an employee since that is the purview of the town manager. Instead, she said perhaps we will be reviewing him as an appointed official. P. Dechert reported that he has already been reviewed as an employee by the town manager for this fiscal year. He recommended that any review the planning commission undertakes should be conducted in executive session. J. Mathias suggested it was important that the review cover both the ZA and staff positions. D. Johnson agreed to discuss with the town manager what information he would like from us and whether we should do the review in executive session. It was noted that although the formal review may already have been completed for this fiscal year, the fiscal year is not actually over yet.

8. *Minutes – 6/1/05.* -

Action: D. Hoffman moved to approve. (J. Mathias second) Discussion followed. S. Richards asked to include R. Hybels motion to change survey format questions to use a single-line format with 2 anchors running from least to most, instead of checkboxes. Motion defeated. 4-4. For - R. Hybels, A. Fulton, A. McRee, D. Johnson, Against - L. McGrew, D. Hoffman, S. Richards, J. Mathias. (Motion and votes are required parts of all minutes, as per the Open Meeting Law.) S. Richards also asked that in general minute's takers should record which members voted which way whenever decisions are not unanimous. There was consensus to continue discussion of this issue at the next meeting. J. Mathias suggested changing the word "tabled" to "deferred to." Several other suggestions for changes to the minutes were made by J. Mathias (as per his 6/8/05 e-mail). All suggested corrections were accepted by unanimous consent. The minutes of 6/1/05 were approved as amended 7-0-1 (A. McRee abstained).

The meeting adjourned at 10:10pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ralph Hybels, Acting Scribe

Jeffrey D. Mathias, Clerk

Approved: July 14, 2005

Daniel Johnson, Chair