

Jericho Planning Commission
Minutes of the February 16, 2016 regular meeting
Approved March 1, 2016

Present: Phyl Newbeck, Jason Cheney, Samantha Dunn, Susan Bresee, Barbara Bedard, Katrina DeLaBuere
Absent: Peter Booth, Public: None
Guests: Katherine Sonnick, Planner, Kim Mercer, Recording Secretary, Chris West, Amy Macrellis, Juli Beth Hinds (via phone)

Phyl called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Jason, seconded by Katrina, the Planning Commission (PC) approved the minutes of February 2, 2016 as written. Motion passed 6-0.

MPG Grant Consultant Interview – Orion Planning and Design/Stone Environmental

Amy Macrellis and Juli Beth Hinds presented a PowerPoint on their MPG grant proposal. The presentation emphasized the importance of looking carefully at the commercial district's standards and zoning language to determine the most effective way to help shape the desired visual outcomes and connectivity. To do this, Amy and Juli Beth said they would talk with staff and PC and "unpack" the review process, asking, 'where was the zoning language helpful?' and 'where didn't it work?' They would examine recent projects for effectiveness of the current regulations. They proposed the following approach to the project: 1. Project kick-off, including town plan evaluation; 2. Community workshop; 3. PC work sessions; and 4. workshop and draft regulations.

After the presentation, the PC asked several questions. Susan asked how a plan for municipal water services could effect, or accelerate development, in the commercial district. Amy discussed her experience with a situation in Waitsfield, which involved a long, drawn-out process where the town ultimately developed a community water system, but did not provide a comprehensive wastewater system.

Samantha inquired about challenges with community engagement, as she believes Jericho is split between people who are reluctant about change, and those who favor development for a broader tax base, and more businesses. She asked the consultants how they might deal with this type of conflict. Juli Beth discussed her experiences in S. Hadley, MA, where she successfully used planning exercises to bring people together and force them to think outside the box.

Barbara asked how the consultants would manage their project in Jericho, since they are also working all over the country. Juli Beth explained that she is Vermont for one week every month, that she is able to do a lot electronically, and that Amy would be local and accessible throughout the project.

Following the departure of Amy, the PC discussed the four proposals submitted. The general consensus was that LandWorks would work best because of their larger staff, local offices,

familiarity with Jericho, and solid reputation. On a motion by Jason and seconded by Susan, the PC unanimously voted to pass along their recommendation of hiring LandWorks to the Selectboard.

Zoning Discussion

The PC discussed the Planned Unit Development (PUD) density bonus section. Jason talked about solar arrays and wanted to make sure the language didn't unintentionally punish those whose roofs aren't angled correctly. He suggested talking with Efficiency Vermont and asking them to review the language in the PUD regulations.

Susan discussed her understanding of the differences between a subdivision and a PUD. Everyone agreed that encouraging PUDs in rural areas makes sense, to preserve open spaces. The question is whether or not we want to encourage PUDs, and if so, is additional density the only tool we have? Could we waive fees, or taxes, to encourage builders to exceed standards? Susan also spoke about the issue of creating diverse neighborhoods, with development that provides multifamily and single family housing mixed.

Chris West introduced himself, and talked about his experience on the Development Review Board, and as a passive house expert. He explained the different levels of residential building standards: "code house", Energy Star, Efficiency Vermont high performance tier (which is 75% more efficient than a code house) also known as "Passive House Lite", and finally Passive House (which is 90% more efficient than a code house). Chris suggested that the 25% bonus for Energy Star houses is setting the bar too low, because costs perhaps \$5k more to bring a \$300k house up to Energy Star. He urged the PC to consider reserving the density bonus for the Efficiency Vermont high performance tier instead.

The PC talked more about density and lot coverage, and about the preferential treatment for affordable and senior housing. Samantha advocated to keep the lot coverage density bonus for this. The PC discussed the timing of the round of amendments and agreed for an April 5, 2016 public hearing. The round of regulation amendments will be wrapped up at their next meeting, March 1, 2016.

Other Business

Phyl reminded everyone that this would be her last meeting as the Chair. On a motion by Barbara, seconded by Samantha, the PC adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Motion passed 6-0.