



Town of Barnard, Vermont

Chartered July 17, 1761

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BARNARD PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - DRAFT

AUGUST 14, 2023

Present: Steve Cota (Chair), Gerald Fredrickson, Greyling VanAlstyne, Kate Reeves, Carin Park, Ed Jodice.

Also Present: Richard Lancaster (Selectman), Rob Ramrath (Administrative Officer), Jeri Berlin, Josh Berlin, Chris Hammarstrom, Brooks Wright, Ellen Miles, Jim Jackson, Sheron Jackson, Teo Zagar, George Keller.

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 PM. Introductions were made by members of the Planning Commission as well as the administrative officer. Steve Cota reviewed the purpose and intentions of the meeting and discussed that there may have been some differences of expectations based on an announcement that went out on the listserv.

2. Review agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. Public comments

All public comments are attached below to the related agenda items.

4. Approve Minutes of July 17, 2023

The minutes were approved.

5. Town Plan Update

a. Final on Town Plan for Preparation for September 25, 2023, Hearing – Discuss

- i. Carin Park proposed a community subcommittee to the Planning Commission to look at the topic of short-term rentals for recommendations for future, potential zoning bylaw recommendations. Throughout the course of the meeting there was significant discussion on subcommittees for both short term rentals and ridgeline development for future, potential zoning bylaw recommendations. Steve Cota discussed that subcommittees have been used historically, and he used the Energy Committee as an example.
- ii. Josh Berlin inquired how aligned the Planning Commission is to the Selectboard. He asked if the town had the political will to move forward with

recommendations in the new Town Plan. Steve Cota responded by explaining that there will be a final, publicly warned hearing for the new town plan before handoff to the Selectboard. He further commented that the Selectboard would then have another public hearing prior to official adoption. He stressed the importance of public involvement and input into the process.

- iii. Jerry Berlin inquired of the possibility of future Planning Commission meetings being made available to remote participants via technologies such as Zoom. Rob Ramrath responded by explaining the technical requirements and large investment associated with creating an experience satisfying to both remote and in-person participants of a hybrid meeting. He commented that the required investment could be upwards of \$10,000 and require dedicated technical staff to run the equipment before, during and after meetings. Rob commented that the Selectboard had discussed this topic on numerous occasions and was not planning to move ahead with remote access to public meetings in Barnard. Richard Lancaster commented that if town taxpayers were willing to make an investment in the technology and the required labor to support it, that the Selectboard would be open to implementing the technology in the future. Kate Reeves commented that detailed minutes are available on the town website and distributed via the listserv and are an opportunity for people to be informed of the outcomes of discussions, as well as be aware of future participation opportunities.
- iv. Carin Park inquired whether Kate Reeves would be willing to head a subcommittee on short term rentals as she had been doing detailed study on the topic. Kate shared that her schedule at this time does not allow her to take on that responsibility. Ellen miles commented that volunteers could be solicited on the Barnard listserv.
- v. Sheron Jackson inquired how a subcommittee would fit with the pending public hearing. Steve Cota went over the details of the hearing process and the logistics of the handoff to the Selectboard. Rob Ramrath described that the intention of the subcommittees as discussed was to form detailed recommendations for future potential zoning regulations.
- vi. Teo Zagar inquired of the language in the town plan regarding the topic of ridgeline development. He asked what the term “provisions” was referring to. Steve Cota explained that it was a forward-looking statement on the formation of future zoning regulations.
- vii. Jim Jackson suggested that the town should perform a survey for ridgelines like the surveys Woodstock and Pomfret conducted. He asserted this should be the starting point before consideration of ridgeline zoning regulations. Kate Reeves mentioned that the pomfret ridgeline zoning regulations were extremely detailed and specific to very special areas in the town that were to be preserved. She recommended that any ridgeline zoning regulations formed in Barnard should use Pomfret’s work as a starting point.

- viii. Jerry Frederickson asked Rob Ramrath to send the Pomfret ridgeline zoning regulations to the members of the Planning Commission. Rob agreed to do so.
- ix. Kate Reeves encouraged public participation at all Planning Commission and Selectboard hearings as a key opportunity for input.
- x. Ellen Miles asked how she could be helpful in sharing information and encouraging participation public participation on the listserv. Rob commented that she had a voice that was unique, versus town officials in encouraging public involvement.

Members of the Planning Commission reviewed language to be included in the town plan addressing the topics of light pollution and short-term rentals. Language was finalized for inclusion in the draft town plan to be reviewed at a public hearing on September 25, 2023.

b. Review and Finalize Report Form to be Sent with Town Plan Draft

The report form was reviewed and accepted by the Planning Commission members.

6. Process Planning for Zoning Regulation Update

Rob Ramrath reviewed the statutorily defined process for the formation and adoption of zoning regulations. The process includes public hearings by both the Planning Commission and the Selectboard prior to any adoption. Rob also shared that it was up to the Selectboard to decide whether new zoning regulations would be adopted by the Selectboard or via a town meeting vote. Rob commented that the most recent revision of Barnard zoning regulations was adopted by a town meeting vote. Ed Jodice commented that he was concerned that a full revision of our present zoning regulations would take too long; that the need for addressing ridgeline zoning was urgent. The group discussed that an incremental approach could be taken to adopt regulations associated with the most pressing issues sooner. Efforts around lower priority issues could occur later in the future. Ed indicated he would be willing to take a leadership role in the formation of a subcommittee to examine ridgeline zoning regulation recommendations.

7. Consider New Member, Brooks Wright for Recommendation to Selectboard – Discuss

Brooks shared his background and his desire to contribute to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission members voted to recommend Brooks' appointment to the Planning Commission by the Selectboard.

8. Other business

Rob Ramrath noted that the town did not have an overhead projector and screen that had been used so successfully by the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission throughout the work on the new town plan. Rob commented that a projector would facilitate continued work on the town plan update as well as follow on work on zoning regulations. The consensus of the Planning Commission was that it was a necessary investment for future Planning Commission meetings.

Rob commented that he had looked at options and the cost would be between \$500. and \$600. Rob said he would take the request to the Selectboard.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 PM.

Minutes prepared by Rob Ramrath, Administrative Officer. All votes unanimous unless otherwise indicated. There will be a Planning Commission Hearing on the Draft Barnard Town Plan on September 25, 2023 at 7:00 PM at the Barnard Town Hall.