



Town of Barnard, Vermont

Chartered July 17, 1761

P.O. Box 274
Barnard, Vermont 05031
(802) 234-9211

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

Present: Steve Cota, Brooks Wright, Ed Jodice, Kate Reeves, Carin Park

ALSO PRESENT: Selectman Richard Lancaster, Clerk Kassie Hull, Steve Johnson, Stuart Hull

1. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 6:59 PM.
2. **Review/Approve Public Hearing Minutes September 25, 2024.** Approved.
3. **Public comments.**

Comment: Steve Johnson had questions about the proposed ridgeline map and bylaw changes. He asked for clarification on why some areas are considered to be a ridge and others are not. Steve is concerned that there will be some lots that can't be built on if the changes go into effect, and if landowners can build, there may be a lot of overwhelming infrastructure costs. He stated that if people must build into the side of a hill a lot more excavation will be required, and this puts more pressure on the common person trying to build a home here. Steve suggested that regulations be implemented as needed to "go with growth" because "planning does not happen overnight" and if we don't allow for healthy growth in our town the tax base will "go through the roof" and hurt the working-class locals. He also shared his experience and expertise regarding forest blocks, wildlife habitats, and forestry plans, educating all about patch cuts and selective cuts, and regrowth.

Planning Commission Response: Ed Jodice said the goal is to maintain the integrity of the views when entering and leaving the town, which is typically via the Route 12 corridor, which is where the visibility study was conducted. He also shared that the proposed language regarding forestry practice, steep slope development, and erosion are gleaned from other ridgeline development documents drafted and implemented within the state of Vermont with the help of TRORC. Ed then shared his personal concerns about the lay of the land becoming unrecognizable, as he has witnessed in other areas of the country with similar topography. He is also worried about the impact of ridgeline development on the view of the night sky and on wildlife movement, which is why he strongly supports a requirement for those who build in these areas to use screening. Kate Reeves asked for change suggestions from Steve; he said he would review the map again.

Comment: Stuart Hull, in his capacity as Volunteer Fire Department Chief, provided feedback about the proposed language that states, *"Applicants shall consult with the Fire Department and receive their concurrence on plans prior to approval or issuance of any driveway or private road permit."* He said that it is not practical or necessary for the department to be involved in approving driveways. He requested the wording be removed from the next draft.

Planning Commission Response: Steve Cota stated that it wouldn't be a bad thing for the fire department to give input but agreed that it's no more difficult to get a fire truck up someone's driveway than it is to get a fuel truck up someone's driveway. Ed Jodice stated that it's up to landowners to have their driveways plowed and sanded, regardless of the slope of the driveway.

4. Old Business – Discuss/consider comments regarding the proposed

The Planning Commission will reach out to Kyle Katz at TRORC to ask the following questions:

- Could an adjustment be made to the screening standards?
- Could there be language added to the permitting process that states the Town and/or Fire Department does not have the responsibility to get access to a residence if the driveway or private road is not maintained, as it is the responsibility of the owner?
- Could the lighting section in the zoning ordinance also be updated?
- Could we reword the purpose statement to make clear that the focus is not that people can't build on the ridgeline, but that people need to build conscientiously?

5. Other Business. There was no other business.

6. Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 PM.

The next meeting will be held on October 15, 2024, at 7PM in the Town Offices. Minutes prepared by Kassie Hull, Clerk of the meeting. All votes unanimous unless otherwise indicated.