

Johnson Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, Jan 14, 2014
APPROVED

Present:

Planning Commission members: Bob Selby, David Butler (vice-chair), David Grozinsky, David Bergh, Cindy Hennard, Kim Dunkley, Suzanne Dodge, Brian Boyden.

Others: Lea Kilvadyova (Community & Economic Development Coordinator).

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Call to Order

Bob Selby called the meeting to order at 7:02. Kim, David Grozinsky and Brian Boyden joined the meeting at 7:07.

Review and Approve Minutes of December 10

David Bergh moved and Suzanne seconded the motion to approve the minutes of December 10th. David Butler, David Bergh, David G., Kim, Cindy, Suzanne and Brian voted to approve the minutes. Bob abstained. The motion passed.

Plan Merger and Form Based Code Funding

Lea reported that the Trustees and the Selectboard had a joint meeting last night at which they discussed the merger of the village and the town plans as well as the funding to pursue form based code. Both Boards were open to the idea of merging the plans. Lea indicated that Walter Pomroy wanted to know whether, once the plans are consolidated, the Trustees will have a voting authority over the plan or the vote will solely lie with the Selectboard. The Boards did not take a formal vote on the plan merger – they first would like to get a response to Walter’s question. Lea said she contacted the LCPC and learned that both boards would vote on the merged plan.

The Planning Commission discussed the logistics of plan approval by both boards. David Butler wondered whether the voting will give the Trustees an authority to vote on the parts of the plan that pertain to the town and, vice versa, the Selectboard will vote on sections of the plan that are currently under the authority of the Trustees. Bob asked if there is a precedence from other towns. Lea said that the Town and the Village of Hyde Park recently adopted a joint plan and her assumption was that their boards voted on the document as a whole.

With regard to form based code, the Trustees and the Selectboard agreed that a good solution would be to include in the town budget a line item for a Planning Commission/ Selectboard consultant. Lea said that both Boards realize that the village would be the most likely beneficiary of the process. She said that if the process reaches the stage of code adoption, the boards are inclined to have the voters decide whether to adopt the code or not.

Lea recommended that the Commission should be prepared to answer questions about the consultant line item at Town Meeting. Bob said he would prefer something a little more formal than a question and answer session. Perhaps a pamphlet that will explain the line item? David Butler suggested including the explanation in the Planning Commission's annual report. We should include the language that explains the line item, why it exists and why we are asking for the resources. The commissioners were supportive of David's suggestion. Bob asked for input for the phrasing of the request. Cyndi said to explain that the public asked the Selectboard and the Trustees to create a form of zoning. To honor the request, the Boards asked the Planning Commission to work on it. In order to meet the requirement, the Planning Commission needs funding. Originally, the Town and the Village applied for a state grant but were denied because other grant requests were given a priority. David G. said that a lot of the grant money was awarded to projects that dealt with the aftermath of hurricane Irene.

David Grozinsky asked whether it was still our intent to write a Request for Proposals for consultant services. Bob confirmed that this was the intent. David G. also said he talked to Paul Dreher and asked him whether, in the absence of full funding, the form based code process can be undertaken in increments. Paul responded that this happens a lot.

Next, the Planning Commission discussed the process for the town and village plan review. They agreed that before they commence their work, they should wait for the formal endorsement by the Selectboard and the Village Trustees. Lea said that by the time the Planning Commission meets in February, the boards will have had an opportunity to take their votes. Kim said that, from Taylor's presentation last month, she understood that now would be a good time to start working on the plan. Kim also mentioned that she liked Brian's idea of undertaking the plan review in sub-committees. David Butler asked how much public input we solicit before we change the document. Lea said that, in past plan revisions, the level of input varied. The last time we updated the town plan, we were making changes to only two segments of the plan – housing and economic development – and so we held public meetings pertaining to those two areas. Lea also said that each plan segment has two parts. One part is informational. Here we lay out data, statistics, facts. The other part is goals and policies. In Lea's view, the part where the public input would be most valued is the formulation of goals and policies.

The Planning Commission discussed that, in the Planning Commission's annual report, it should be mentioned that the Commission recommended the joining of the two plans to the Selectboard and the Trustees, and that the recommendation is under consideration. There was a discussion about the need to explain that the plan consolidation is not identical with the merger of the town and the village, and in fact, the merger of the town and the village is not the goal of the Commission's efforts. The suggestion to merge the plans reflects that the commission is thinking holistically and has encountered that there are many issues that are common to the town and the village. Also, the update of the plan is a lot of work and the Commission wants to spend their time efficiently. To begin the review process we will need to review the town and the village plan, as well as the LCPC's comments. Lea will make copies of the village plan for distribution.

Minutes taken by: Lea Kilvadyova