**Johnson Planning Commission**

**Meeting Minutes, Tuesday October 14, 2014**

Present PC members: Bob Selby, David Bergh, David Grozinsky, Kim Dunkley, David Butler, Cynthia Hennard, Paul Warden, Ben Waterman.

Guests: Tanner Nibley, Belinda LaFountain (JSC students)

Note: All votes are unanimous unless otherwise noted

*Review of September 9, 2014 minutes*

**David Bergh moved and David Butler seconded the motion to approve the September 9th minutes, with the requested changes. All voted in favor.**

*Form Based Code: Review of Paul Dreher’s progress report*

Kim Dunkley will attend the Oct 15 meeting of the form based committee.

Ben talked about the Oct 1 walkabout. He said that the walkabout was a lot more educational than feedback oriented. The group stopped at several properties. Paul pointed at design features that each property represented and how could these features be incorporated into a code. The group stopped at the Hoag property where the discussion was about setbacks and how when you don’t have a setback regulation, buildings can be oriented anywhere on the property. The result is a lot there that is filled with cars instead of a structure.

Setbacks were a recurring theme. Another example was the Fisher Auto Parts store and the new construction that just happened there. The construction was an addition to the existing structure so the discussion was about whether we should codify additions or let that go.

At the Studio Center, Paul talked about transitioning from a commercial zone to a residential zone and how the design of a structure can ease that transition. For example, the code can specify a surface area for windows facing the street. Typically, in commercial zones, form based code specifies a larger window surface area. As one transitions to School Street, the window area decreases. An attendee asked whether this will stifle innovation. Paul said no and that we can codify what Johnson wants to see. If we want to see a glass house, we will codify a glass house.

At Johnson Woolen Mills, Paul highlighted multiple entranceways to the long building and how that gives the street a different feel than a long building with only one entrance way. Multiple entrance ways is a unique structural feature that could be codified. Paul said that, in the code, the number of entrance ways could be proportional to the length of a structure’s frontage.

A question about variances was brought up. According to Paul, granting variances is not legally permissible. Ben said he would like to follow up on that. Other Planning Commission members agreed. David Butler said that he saw many instances, in traditional zoning, where variances were granted. Ben thought that was an extremely important question to verify because a lot of community members will want to know how strictly the code will be interpreted. Bob will contact Paul Dreher to clarify.

Next, the Planning Commission reviewed Paul Dreher’s progress report for the month of September. Per agreement between the Town and Paul, the Planning Commission needs to review Paul’s report and approve payment. Ben noted that it would be nice to see Paul’s evaluation of the walkabout. His report said that the walkabout discussed the DNA of the community, both positive and negative. David Butler thought that the evaluation may be presented at the next steering committee meeting. He suggested that anything that is presented to the Committee should be passed onto the Planning Commission. Bob will communicate this request to Paul. **Kim moved and David Grozinsky seconded the motion to approve the report. All voted in favor.**

*Town and Village Plan Revision*

Paul Warden reviewed the Utilities and Facilities chapter in the Town and Village Plans. He compared the information in both plans for consistency. Paul will also make notes for Lea about his observations, questions and suggestions. Kim said that at some point we will need to review the plans for consistency with statutory goals. We have an assessment sheet from the LCPC about how our plans comply. From the assessment sheet, Kim read LCPC’s comments pertaining to the Utility and Facility chapter. Kim also read the LCPC’s evaluation about how our plan addresses the renewable energy planning goal.

There was a discussion about the maintenance of cemeteries. Perhaps in the future there will be a need for the town to take over cemetery maintenance and if so, this should be included in policies. Cindy said that we should include information about Lamoille County Mental Health as well.

Bob reviewed the Land Use chapter of both plans. He noted that this section was written with the mind of implementing traditional zoning. He pondered whether the style of the Land Use chapter should continue in the same direction or whether we might want to consider a change, especially in light of our form based code efforts.

There was a discussion about the slope of driveways and how fire trucks cannot get to houses that are accessible by steep inclines. A policy that addresses this concern could be included in the Land Use section. Cyndi mentioned that the access issue could also be addressed by listing our assets and their qualities. In this case, we could mention that our fire trucks cannot reach homes with slopes greater than xx% or that the fire trucks can only access slopes up to a certain grade.

Bob observed that our plan should make a mention of a pharmacy missing in our town. David Grozinsky mentioned that Mike Comeau is pursuing a pharmacy and a liquor store for Johnson. He would like to expand to the former Sudsy’s Wash & Dry.

Cyndi suggested that our policy update should be done toward the end of the planning process once we have discussed and updated the informational part of the plan.

*Other Business*

Our next meeting is scheduled for Veteran’s Day. Several members will not be able to attend. The Planning Commission agreed to reschedule for Thursday, November 13th.

David Butler asked if anybody knew about the activity in the area of the town where he lives. The issue at hand seems to be the erosion of town roads that wash out into Foote Brook and the impact the wash outs have on waterways all the way to Lake Champlain. David asked how this issue could be incorporated into our planning process. Is this a transportation issue or a natural resources issue?

As far as the next step, the Planning Commission members will review plan chapters assigned to them and send their comments to Lea.

David Bergh mentioned that the LCPC is inviting municipalities to provide feedback to the regional plan. The meeting will on November 25th.

David Bergh made an announcement that the State Transportation Board will hold a public forum about anticipated transportation needs in the County. This meeting will be at JSC on November 12th.

Minutes taken by Lea Kilvadyova