

Johnson Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 18, 2013

Present:

Planning Commission members: Bob Selby (chair), David Butler (vice-chair), David Grozinsky, Kim Dunkley, Suzanne Dodge, Cynthia Hennard, Ben Waterman, David Bergh, Brian Boyden (joined the meeting at 7:50 P.M.)

Others: Jen Stefanski, Jeanne Engel, Andrew Martin (News & Citizen); Jodi Tallman, Walter Pomroy, Duncan Hastings (Municipal Manager) Diane Lehouillier, Don Blais, Annette Vachon, Seth Jensen (Lamoille County Planning Commission), Lea Kilvadyova (Community & Economic Development Coordinator and Planning Commission secretary).

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Call to Order

Bob called the meeting to order at 7:03.

Review and Approve Minutes of June 11th and June 28th

David G. moved to approve the minutes of June 11th; David Butler seconded the motion. All voted in favor

Kim moved to approve the minutes of June 28th; David G. seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Maplefields Follow up

Bob Selby presented a summary of the July 3rd letter sent by the Planning Commission to R.L.Vallee. Skip Vallee responded to the letter by stating that he would be available to further discuss the project and take community input in November. Currently, he is busy with his Newport project.

The Maplefields project has been a subject of discussion at recent Trustee and Selectboard meetings. Both Boards tasked the Planning Commission with carrying the dialogue with R.L.Vallee.

Duncan said that the Selectboard tasked Lea with looking into quotes for consultant services that would help us analyze the proposed conceptual plans and potential traffic issues that the Maplefields project might cause. Seth Jensen stated that the Lamoille County Planning Commission can help by conducting Rt 15 traffic volume counts and pedestrian sidewalk counts. They can also assist in reviewing any traffic data or studies that R.L. Vallee prepares.

Bob reviewed the letter that the Trustees and the Selectboard sent to R.L.Vallee. In the letter, the Boards expressed their interest in working cooperatively with R.L.Vallee as they firm up their plans. The Boards stated that it was important to them to try to integrate the gas station redevelopment into other

significant improvements recently implemented in the Village (such as the Main Street Project) so that they complement each other.

Duncan stated that he met with Tim Vallee on site to discuss a different issue – there is a water system leak near the Vallee property that the Village is working on fixing. Tim told Duncan that they want to work with the community and have already considered some of the ideas discussed at the Planning Commission. A couple things that were mentioned is they are evaluating placement of the building toward the west side of the lot, designing the building to for a more Johnson specific architecture, lighting, possible inclusion of diesel at the main pump canopy. Their intent is not to be a truck stop and he acknowledged that most tractor trailers are not going to stop at this site due to access issues. Duncan said that R.L.Vallee wants to keep working with the community but he got the sense that they don't really want to come to meeting to be vilified in public. Duncan also mentioned that he got a phone call from Vallee's attorney who inquired whether we were planning to adopt zoning.

Cindy mentioned that she heard that there was a property for sale on Route 100C. She asked whether this can impact the whole picture and the eventual layout of the proposed project. Lea confirmed that the Williams property, which neighbors the Vallee property, is indeed for sale. She said that if Vallee decides to buy the property and adjust his plans to include this property, the traffic impacts that the community is concerned about might change. Therefore it may be premature to spend dollars on a traffic study that would focus on the analysis of the current conceptual plans.

Bob invited members of the public to provide comments.

Annette Vachon said she is concerned about the scale of the proposed project and would like to see the project be adjusted to something that looks good and fits in. She didn't want the development to become a truck stop. She would like to see a design that incorporates grass areas and trees, and moves the building to the back of the lot.

Bon Blais mentioned that the gas station by the Steeple Market in Fairfax is a nice place to gas up. He felt that gas station canopies have a similar connotation as billboards and impact the landscape the same way.

David Grozinsky said that about 30 people attended the Trustee meeting at which village zoning was discussed. He said that in order to adopt zoning, a proper statutory process needs to be followed, which will take time. He also said that the people were concerned about the project scale (e.g. 4,500 sq foot building or 3,700 sq foot canopy). He said that our best option at this time is to communicate with Skip. At the same time, there is an interest in reviving the zoning discussion.

Walter said that the 2005 zoning proposal was tabled by the Trustees.

Ben Waterman asked if there will be enough time to conduct a traffic study after the Act 250 app is submitted and before the Act 250 public hearing is held. Duncan said yes. He participated in many Act 250 processes and said that throughout the process, great attention will be given to concerns of the hosting municipality. There will be many opportunities for us to influence the process.

David Bergh asked whether ordinances could be adopted as a possible approach to regulating development. Duncan said that it depends on what kind of ordinance we are talking about. Technically, in the language of the statute, a zoning bylaw is an ordinance. He thought that noise and idling

ordinance could be put in place anytime and their effect would not be impacted by the timeline of the Act 250 process. He wasn't sure about a lighting ordinance.

Ben Waterman asked about the clarification regarding the truck stop. Bob read a part of Duncan's email that stated Tim Vallee's take on the truck parking. An excerpt from Duncan's email follows: "Tim also said they want to try to dispel the notion that they want the new store to be a "truck stop". They have even considered not putting a canopy over the diesel pump. He did note that a lot of local people use the diesel pump. In his opinion most of this traffic is not tractor trailer trucks, but dump trucks, delivery trucks and other smaller vehicles using diesel. They feel it is important to continue to serve these customers. As to the "parking spaces" out back, he said there is parking already existing and trucks do use it now."

David Butler said that the above is supported by the fact that there are no facilities or showers proposed as part of the development. If Vallee decides to add those later, they will need to modify their Act 250 permit.

Walter proposed to engage the community in creating a perfect design for the gas station. Kim asked how we get people on board to participate.

Form based code

Kim said she spoke with Paul Dreher, Newport's form based code administrator. Paul said that the form based code approach to zoning is a town revitalization tool and can have a de-zoning effect. It is a place making tool. Kim said that Paul is willing to consult with us. We could get funding through the Municipal Planning Grant Program or Livability Solutions which is an offshoot of the Project for Public Spaces. Paul helped Huntington to design their code. They implemented it town wide which shows that it is possible to apply to code to rural areas.

There was a discussion about how best to advertise the meeting. Brian mentioned that a mailer would be a good way. Ben Waterman asked when would be a good time to start the process. The Planning Commission could start immediately by educating ourselves about the form based code and how it works.

David Bergh made a motion to have Lea contact Paul Dreher and schedule a public presentation in September. David Butler seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

David Butler made a motion for Lea to compose a draft document that will inform public about form based code. The draft will be sent to th Planning Commission for comment and adjustment. When approved, it will be distributed to the community. David Grozinsky seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Planning Commission Budget

Lea stated that for fiscal year 2013 – 2014, which began on July 1st, the budget is \$1,300 for secretarial pay and \$900 for expenses. To date, The Planning Commission spent \$67.53 on secretarial pay.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lea Kilvadyova