

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 5, 2020 MEETING
Approved on November 2, 2020**

Commission/Board Members Present: Koi Boynton, Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, George Lamphere and Mark Letorney.

Commission/Board Members Absent:

Also, Present Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator).

The meeting began at: 6:31 p.m.

Amendments to Agenda

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements, Correspondence & Other Business

No citizens to be heard, announcements, correspondence, or other business.

Minutes of the September 14, 2020 Minute

G. Gebauer MOVED to approve the minutes.

K. Boynton SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 5- 0.

Minutes of the September 21, 2020 Minute

G. Gebauer MOVED to approve the minutes.

G. Lamphere SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 4- 0.

K. Boynton abstained.

Grant Writer

K. Boynton reported N. Rogers had the final version of the RFP for the grant writer position. A Selectboard Member, N. Rogers and K. Boynton will interview respondents and make the hire. The Selectboard has charged the Planning Commission with grant writer oversight, at least in the short-term, due to the size, expense, and complexity of current Planning Commission projects.

G. Lamphere said the Commission needs to be conscientious of other town groups who have identified grants to fund their initiatives.

K. Boynton suggested having a grant writer request form which included the grant description, deadline, and amount.

G. Lamphere request an example form and added he would like the grant writer's time to go towards securing funding for large projects.

S. Jensen said if the Commission oversees the position for more than one year, he would like a better idea of the needs of other groups because there may be funding/project overlap with their current work. He said collaboration makes for compelling grant applications and it would be great if the Commission could be a conduit for community projects. He said this approach makes sense for the Commission as it is supported by statute.

G. Gebauer said it is important for the Commission to budget the grant writer's time wisely to make the most of the budget.

K. Boynton said once we know the rate of the hire, we will know how much grant writing time the town has and can allocate it accordingly. She added that the typical hourly rate for a grant writer is \$50-100.

G. Lamphere suggested implementing some type of cost sharing for use of the writer to stretch the budgeted \$5,000.

M. Letorney also suggested offering a modest wage with bonuses for awarded grants.

Boynton said the preferred RFQ response deadline is October 31st.

1705 Rte. 128 & Town Center Revitalization Vision Statement

G. Lamphere asked whether the Commission would like to table development of a vision statement for the property or move forward.

The Commission agreed with the vision statement and its incorporation into public outreach materials.

Public Outreach & Education

G. Gebauer noted he did not have time during the week to pull the different town center revitalization project pieces together in order to determine how best to consolidate everything in one place. He said he will incorporate the vision statement into his work.

M. Manka suggested at some point creating questions on the webpage which are linked to answers as opposed to having one long Q and A document. She said this would allow the public to home in on the answers to their specific questions. She also noted that the Q and A document will likely get quite lengthy as time goes on.

G. Gebauer said he would reach out to Montgomery's web designer to inquire about rates.

M. Letorney said the Commission needs to market the project. He added that the website should be easy to follow and focus on a few strategic points at the gateway to the site. He said the site should include illustrations as well.

M. Manka said anyone granted access can create a new webpage on the town website. She noted that it is not difficult to develop project specifics portals, but it is time consuming. She said she would not be able to assist with the development of a comprehensive town center revitalization project website/page at this time.

K. Boynton asked G. Gebauer to reach out to web developers.

M. Letorney suggested reaching out to the community first to see whether local web designers are willing to volunteer their time.

G. Gebauer agreed to post a request for assistance on FPF.

G. Lamphere said Green Mountain Gazette recently reached out to the Town to inquire about a wastewater story.

The Commission agreed they should wait until the preliminary engineering report is complete and the VCDP grant awardees are announced before pursuing a newspaper article.

G. Gebauer added there is value in knowing our next steps prior to the next information push.

Interim Bylaws – Primitive Campground Request

G. Gebauer said he reviewed M. Manka's September 29th memo and is of the opinion that it is not worth spending time on interim bylaws when the Commission will be jumping onto permanent regulatory amendments in the coming weeks. He believes the Commission can draft regulations and have them ready for approval by the spring of 2021. He said the legal uncertainty

surrounding the unintended consequences of interim bylaws gives him pause. He added pursuing interim bylaws every time a use is requested becomes a slippery slope and it is the Commission's responsibility to address these matters in a permanent manner in order to have regulatory consistency and known outcomes.

S. Jensen asked if the Selectboard was telling the Commission to develop interim bylaws or asking the Commission to investigate the matter. He believes developing interim bylaws would distract the Commission from drafting permanent solutions. He added interim bylaws come with dangers and complications. He feels the Commission can get amendments completed by the spring or summer of 2021 and should prioritize amendments to ensure they meet said deadline. He admitted the amendment process is slow for a good reason so some amendments may need to be put off so they can meet the spring deadline. However, if the Selectboard feels this needs to be resolved as soon as possible they can force the issue.

M. Manka informed the Commission that she has amendment notes written on almost everything other page of her regulations. She offered to type her notes into a working copy of the regulations by November 2nd.

The Commission agreed to move amendment discussions to November 2nd and G. Lamphere offered to contact J. Andrews to discuss the Planning Commission's view of interim bylaws.

Draft Outline - Planning Commission Town Report

The Planning Commission reviewed and approved of the town report outline.

G. Lamphere said he would move forward with drafting the town report. He also asked M. Manka to contact N. Rogers about the submission deadline.

Google Docs File Structure

The Planning Commission reviewed the google folder prepared by G. Lamphere. They agreed it will help the Commission better organize documents.

M. Manka asked how the Commission sees the folders being populated. She asked whether packet materials would be redistributed into project specific folders for easy retrieval. She expressed some concern about maintaining two data bases as she already maintains a planning and zoning data based on Town server.

G. Lamphere said the Commission can see how use of the folders plays out over time.

Planning Commission Work Plan

The Planning Commission reviewed and revised their work plan. Their November 2nd meeting will be dedicated to regulatory amendments.

Wrap up & Next Meeting

The next Planning Commission meeting will be dedicated to receiving a community wastewater status report, 1705 property status report, grant writer status report and public outreach planning.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:25 p.m.

Submitted by,
Melissa Manka, Westford Planning Coordinator

