

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR MAY 3, 2021 MEETING**

Approved on June 7, 2021

The meeting began: 6:34pm

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

Also, Present: Melissa Manka - Town Planner, Taylor Newton – Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Daniel Strobridge – Resident

Amendments to Agenda: NONE

Vermont Community Development Program Planning Grant – Consultant Interviews

SE Group - Representing SE Group: Make Kane – SE Group, Stephen Diglio - Case, Benjamin Bornstein, Tom Hand.

Mark Kane provides overview of SE Group and KAS partnership and experience. They have a team of landscape architects proficient in design, particularly in stormwater. They are community and recreation planning, renowned in VT and nationally. They have civil engineers with experience in brownfields and river access and a history of community engagement. Their team could get to work June to December. They can engage in two community listening sessions. The first would provide input for the visioning and planning stage June to August. Early fall they would present early concepts to both town and community for early reactions and input. Community input is needed for the preliminary plan.

Questions: Examples of two past projects? Waitsfield Town Hall which involved working with the municipality to balance recreation fields with town hall green design, stormwater and provide public access. Richardson multifamily project in South Burlington. This project involved stringent stormwater restrictions in a back lot that needed to be balanced with backyard space. They ended up with a multiuse space over the stormwater and wetlands. This project allowed them to emphasize stormwater as a community asset, as a park.

Question regarding the limitations of the existing lot that is 3 acres but only has 1 acre to build out on with brownfields and stormwater. SE responded talking about the Waldorf School project that was surrounded by wetlands and how they worked with partners, beyond their team, to tap into those talents and address challenges.

Question about experience working the existing project partners. SE has worked with Champlain Housing Trust and the River Conservancy and similar organizations.

Question regarding experience working with contamination on a site. SE Group has a great deal of experience with contamination. The best strategy to keep cost down is to keep as much on site

as possible and mitigate it. Soil caps, clean soil over it, fence it off and let it go wild are some strategies. It is necessary to account for all costs as part of the design. They worked on a similar project in Montpelier and needed to work with the state agencies. Combining civil engineering with landscape design is critical and it needs to be a conversation all along the way with the town but also with the state agencies.

The site is part of the common stormwater, does SE have experience with green infrastructure to address this? YES! The site plan will need to address whether it is in the streetscape or behind the property, there will need to be extensive work on this area. Designing intentional plantings to fit stormwater in the design and property, will be considered.

Question regarding how the site plan can address future development needs. SE worked on Market St. (the South Burlington project) where they needed to anticipate future development. They provided a toolkit with possible solutions for future development. In this project they were able to address current needs and a vision for the future.

Taylor reviewed the timeline for selection and that the firm would be contacted by the end of the week.

Trudell Civil Engineering - Representing Trudell: Jennifer Desautels and Lucy Thayer

Jennifer Desautels provided an overview of Trudell. She is a licensed civil engineer and they have a team of engineers in multi disciplines – survey, wetlands, landscape architect. They do everything from large scale, big picture, to plants in a parking lot. Their multidisciplinary team helps them to move projects forward and look at all aspects of a project. Beautiful master plans can leave things out and it helps to look at every aspect along the way.

Question regarding 2 past projects. St. Albans Town's public works move to a new location was one example. They work on everything from the feasibility study to the master plan. They had to address everything – water, sewer, and electrical. A South Burlington project was another example. They needed to attend public meetings and provide 2D and 3D renderings to get it approved by residents. While this was a private project it was planned development and required interim zoning and special approval from the City Council. It had a lot of similarities with this project – brownfields, municipal sewer, wetlands delineation, fitting everything on a small site and getting it to permitting.

Question regarding experience with the project's existing partners. Trudell has worked with ACCD, Better Connects and their team has experience working with multi stakeholder groups. They have worked on lots of projects with public grants. They are currently working on a large stormwater project that requires working with every state agency that you need to get permits from. Negotiating and mediating with agencies, is something they do often, revising plans and compromising.

Question regarding experience working with contamination. Kaigles gas station in South Burlington is one example. They needed to address the contamination and engaging stakeholders

all along the way. Early identification and understanding are critical. Timing can take longer to identify constraints, have a clear mitigation plan and work to get state approval early.

Question regarding stormwater on site and experience of using green infrastructure to address this. Much of Trudell's work is regarding stormwater. Infiltration is the focus – gravel wetlands with nice plantings.

Question regarding the sites role in dealing with common stormwater and how this could be addressed. Trudell deals with the state and VTrans, nearly, every day. They can take the river and everything into account.

Question regarding public engagement. Yes, Trudell is already considering public engagement – from getting people there and ensuring that they are engaged and productive. Starting onsite with a walk through – with the site plan and sketching and then continuing to revise the site plan.

Taylor reviewed timeline with Trudell.

Discussion: Taylor has experience working with both firms. It was discussed that Trudell would need to rely on LE consulting on the corrective action plan. It was pointed out that we do not currently have funding for LE. The group felt that SE Group had more examples of work that is in line with the 1705 project. Public engagement was a focus of the discussion with SE Group and the PC didn't need to ask about it, like we did with Trudell. SE's strategy was upfront and clear.

Seth wanted to acknowledge that he has worked with Michael Kane in the past as part of the executive committee for the VT Planners Association.

VOTE: George makes a motion to hire SE Group to work with CCRPC and Westford for the VCDP planning grant for the 1705 property.

Gordon seconded the motion.

The motion passes with all in favor.

Taylor went over next steps of emailing the steering committee with the recommendation of contraction with SE Group and sending the SE Group's proposal. The firm will then be contacted.

It is on the next SB agenda to sign the grant agreement. They will also have 2 contracts to sign – with CCRPC and SE Group by June 1. June 11 is the next steering committee meeting.

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements, Correspondence & Other Business: NONE

Minutes of the April 5, 2021 Meeting:

VOTE: Gordon makes a motion to move the minutes of April 5th as amended.

Mark seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Minutes of April 19, 2021 Meeting:

Public Outreach Strategy & Planning: The PC has been working on securing letters of support from the high-capacity users for the Northern Borders grant – Westford Store, Common Hall, Red Brick, and apartment building. This begins to engage them in understanding how waste water will impact them but only scratches the surface.

The PC would like to revisit the meeting with the consultants. Seth and Melissa met with the consultants and discussed a meeting with the potential users about design and how the system works. The invite would go to the full town but the priority would be the end users. This initial community meeting would be a walk around the Common with the ground markings to provide a better understanding of the system layout. This meeting will allow the PC and consultants a chance to respond to questions and begin to engage the public. The survey to end users would need to be part of Step II. Final design will include the details of how the connection will happen on people's properties and we need them to understand this impact before asking them to respond to a survey. There was discussion regarding this process, key points include – ensuring that end users understand the benefits of early connection, importance of PC being the face of the project, having multiple avenues for people to ask questions. Discussion moved to system construction costs and operation and maintenance costs. Affordability for end users and little impact on taxes is the priority and if it can't be achieved the project can't move forward. Back to public outreach – an informational sheet and letter should be developed and dates for a larger walkaround and informational meeting should be decided. It was acknowledged that specific questions still exist that we need the consultants to respond to. These nuances of the PER need to be better understood for the public engagement to work well. PC questions will be gathered and sent to consultants. Public outreach and the specific questions will be covered in the next PC meeting in two weeks – it will be on the agenda for a hour discussion.

Website Updates: The PER Summary is the next thing that needs to go up and it should be done by the end of the week. Gordon pointed out that some pages need updates and he will review and work with Melissa on edits. A separate page just for finances will need to happen but that piece is not ready yet.

There was discussion regarding how to communicate with the SB regarding the STEP 2 and how it is a loan that is forgiven. Tom Brown handles the finances for the Clean Water Revolving Loan fund. We need the clearest answers possible regarding the loan terms in order to communicate with the SB.

June Newsletter/FPF Article: George will take it. Thanks to Gordon for the May Newsletter.

2020 Work Plan: The SB may like to have special meetings to discuss larger PC projects/agenda items in addition to having the standing PC updates on the agenda. Nanette will reach out about this. Koi and Seth will attend this week's PC to discuss the Northern Borders application submission.

Wrap up & Next Meeting:

Adjourn: 9:06 pm