TOWN OF ESSEX
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
January 23, 2020

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT: Dustin Bruso, Chair; David Raphael; John Mangan, Clerk; Ned Daly; and John Alden.

VISITING VILLAGE COMMISSIONERS: Diane Clemens; Philip Batacios; and Patrick Scheld.

OTHERS PRESENT: Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Darren Schibler, Planner; Paula Duke; Joseph Flynn; Stephen Vock; and Deb Ehler-Holland.

Chairman Bruso welcomed and thanked the visiting Village Commissioners for attending the meeting and both boards introduced themselves.

AGENDA ITEM 1: AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA (if applicable): Chairman Bruso called out the changes to the Agenda, which included joint discussions with the Village Commissioners regarding the Capital Plan and VT Green Streets Guides.

AGENDA ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS: Chairman Bruso explained the process regarding the Consent Agenda. He asked if there were any comments on this matter. There were none.

AGENDA ITEM 3: CONSENT AGENDA:

- Subdivision: Forestdale Heights, Inc: Proposal to subdivide a lot with a cell tower to allow future development of the remaining lands located at 21 Corporate Drive in the Resource Preservation District-Industrial Zone (RPD-I). Tax Map 72, Parcel 3, Lot 21.

Commissioner Schumacher MOVED and Commissioner Alden SECONDED a MOTION to approve the Consent Agenda. The MOTION passed 5-0.

AGENDA ITEM 4: DISCUSSION ON TOWN CAPITAL PLAN: DENNIS LUTZ (TOWN & VILLAGE)

Dennis Lutz provided a brief overview of the Capital Plan that was previously presented to the Selectboard. Lutz explained that the Plan was set up in 6 sections, as follows:

1. Projects shown on 11x17 plans, detailing status of projects. The Capital Plan will go to the Selectboard in early February for adoption. This is independent of Town Meeting. He explained how money is assigned to projects and how project completion dates can change depending on assigned grants; unexpected town emergencies; and the like.

2. A hand-out showing a one thousand view elevation. He reported the balance funds as of June, 2019, and the estimated balance funds for June 30, 2020. He described where the money comes from, which projects included grants, impact fees, etc. He

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49 reported that the funds collected from the 2-cent tax was just over $500,000. He explained the FY21 column shows what the town will spend, which is estimated at $2.4 million.

3. Each major project has a major project sheet, which is used for the auditors. It shows the money taken in, what was spent, and what is left in the bank.

4. He explained that every November he provides a written memo to the Selectboard, explaining the monies from last July 1st to where projects are currently. He discussed carryover projects from previous years and current year projects.

5. He described how projects are ranked.

6. This section contains a detail sheet on each project. He noted that the numbers might not agree as there are circumstances, usually circumstances overtaken by events that change the timeline on projects.

Lutz reported that ‘unrestricted funds’ are funds that are left over from other projects. He stressed the importance of this fund as they are helpful when unexpected problems arise, and provided the following example:

- The highway garage had structural problems. It ended up being approximately $150,000 over cost. Unrestricted funds were used to pay the remaining balance.

Lutz reported that the Town hired a part-time (20 hours) building maintenance person for both the town and village. The good news is he finds the problems. The bad news is there is no money. However, the Selectboard agreed to increase this position to 28 hours.

Lutz described the problems at the Essex Free Library. There were water issues, foundation crumbling and mold in the walls. This cost $90,000. However, much more is needed to this building, such as repairing the brick that is falling apart on the front façade. The first estimate for this repair came in at $30,000. This cost is built into the budget. However, other improvements are needed, such as ADA improvements. This money will likely come from the unrestricted funds.

Commissioner Alden asked if the plans are still in the works for a bigger fix to Memorial Hall. Lutz replied no. He explained that grants did not come through for this project.

Commissioner Alden asked if the Village library was on the list they were reviewing. Lutz replied no, however explained that some of the storm water improvements in the Capital Plan benefit both the Town and Village.

Commissioner Alden asked about the water tower. Lutz said that project was a difficult decision. He stated that the question is if that project was an ‘operation maintenance’ issue or an ‘operational’ issue.

Commissioner Alden noted that the Village hires an engineer to review projects and asked if, as time goes on, the Town would review Village projects. Lutz replied that both Boards would need to answer that question. Lutz suggested that if a merger happened, he believed they would make the best arrangement with all the engineers. Lutz noted that the Town does not design, and that takes a different engineering skill set.

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A brief discussion ensued on the Tree Farm as the parcel has land in both the Town and Village. They discussed the existing buildings on the Town side, noting they were in very bad shape. However, there are deed restrictions that need to be adhered to, such as a tear down.

Commissioner Mangan asked if community involvement would help with the Tree Farm. Lutz replied that it is the residents who usually raise the issues and Public Works investigates. Lutz was open to ideas.

Chairman Bruso suggested that Public Works come in to educate the Planning Commission on what Public Works is looking for as goals with planning projects. Bruso stated that staff provides Public Works comments verbatim, however he felt it would be helpful to better understand the ‘links’ Public Works is trying to achieve. Lutz stated that he avoids confrontation with the developers, but they would entertain a separate meeting for a discussion.

A discussion ensued on stormwater. Chairman Bruso suggested this was a good topic for a presentation, using the Town Center as an example. Lutz replied that Lowe’s was a good example as they put all its stormwater underground. He stated a filter may need to be added to treat the phosphorus.

A discussion ensued on phosphorus. Lutz stated that the issue of phosphorus may be the industries or the processes that contribute more – it depends on the discharges. Lutz stated that the Town charges a hefty fee for stormwater.

Commissioner Daly stated that he thinks differently on this matter. He pointed out that Lutz talks on how to treat the problem, however he believes the PC needs to think how to stop the occurrence when reviewing projects, and provided ‘paving’ as an example. He suggested they look at the entire process to help reduce the problem.

Darren Schibler asked about the CWD Town Center waterline. Lutz stated that it was in design.

**AGENDA ITEM 5: TOWN & VILLAGE DISCUSSION: VT GREEN STREETS GUIDE**

Darren Schibler noted that there are ideas in the VT Green Streets Guide for small improvements to reduce phosphorus in developments. He asked if the PC wanted to incorporate these ideas into the regulations. Chairman Bruso suggested the document be added to the reference documents that the PC adopts yearly.

Chairman Bruso referred to Page 95 of the document, regarding a design strategy. Schibler suggested adding this to the landscaping requirements in the regulations. Commissioner Raphael suggested to also insert it into the PUD section. Commissioner Alden suggested that it should show evidence of superior design of PUDs.

Paula Duke stated that it would be helpful to have these ‘resource documents’ at the town library.

Schibler informed the PC that the Conservation & Trails Committee is working on recommendations to landscaping.
Commissioner Raphael MOVED and Commissioner Mangan SECONDED a MOTION to adopt the ‘VT Green Streets Guide’ as an additional resource for PC design guidelines. The MOTION passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 6: MINUTES 1/09/20:

A Motion was made to approve the minutes, and then withdrawn. The PC requested to table the minutes to the next meeting in order to clarify language on the condition for the 25 Carmichael Street application.

AGENDA ITEMS 7: OTHER BUSINESS: None.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

By: _____________________________

Dustin R. Bruso, Chair