TOWN OF ESSEX
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
March 12, 2020

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT: Dustin Bruso, Chair; Josh Knox, Vice-Chair; John Mangan, Clerk; David Raphael; Jonathan Schumacher; Ned Daly; John Alden.

OTHERS PRESENT: Owiso Makuku, Community Development Director; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Darren Schibler, Planner; Sally Fleury; Paula Duke; and Deb Ehler Holland.

Chairman Bruso called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 1: AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA (if applicable): A grammatical correction to the date of the minutes.

Chairman Bruso provided the oath to the public.

AGENDA ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Regarding the Consent Agenda, Chairman Bruso asked what the development potential could be if the boundary line was eliminated. Schibler stated that a dilapidated house is currently situated on the second parcel, but the applicant stated it was likely a tear down. Schibler stated that the current regulations allow for a second house and the landowner could rebuild. Schibler noted that the Conservation Committee reported the house is on the State historic register. Commissioner Daly noted the lot was "pretty wet."

Commissioner Daly expressed his concern about the location of the HVAC equipment on the new medical building located at 2 Essex Way and he believed it was not located in the area that was approved. Staff explained that the wrong plan was provided to Commissioner Daly upon his earlier request, and it was in the location as approved. Commissioner Daly said, "Shame on us for letting this be placed in the area, we need to be more careful." He noted the architectural rendering did not show anything on the plan for this equipment. Staff noted that landscaping was proposed to shield the HVAC equipment from the road.

Sally Fleury asked how far a residential home was located from the placement of the HVAC equipment, as she did not see this equipment as an issue. Commissioner Daly replied that, in this case, there are no residential neighbors, and repeated that he wanted a better review for this type of equipment going forward.

Paula Duke noted that the UVM building was a “really nice building” and wished that Sea Comm was required to do the same. Duke noted that if the HVAC equipment were in the corner, it would be easier to screen.
AGENDA ITEM 3: CONSENT AGENDA: BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT: JEREMY STREETER & NIOUETTE BERGERON: REQUEST TO ELIMINATE A BOUNDARY LINE TO CREATE ONE LARGER PARCEL LOCATED AT 54 & 62 BROWNS RIVER ROAD IN THE LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (R1) ZONE. TAX MAP 11, PARCELS 23 & 24, LOTS 1 & 0.

Commissioner Raphael MOVED and Vice-Chair Knox SECONDED a MOTION to approve the Consent Agenda item, as written. The MOTION passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 4: DISCUSSION: ETC|NEXT

Chairman Bruso asked the PC to keep in mind as to what they should do going forward; when to present to the Selectboard; or waiting until changes are made.

Staff reported that after the consultants submitted the re-draft of the ETC|NEXT Plan, they felt it did not capture all the changes as requested by the Planning Commission (PC). Therefore, staff mocked up changes to Chapter 2 and shared this draft with Vice-Chair Knox and Commissioner Alden as they had previously provided recommended changes to the consultants. Staff clarified that the entire PC was just seeing Draft Chapter 2 at this meeting.

Commissioner Knox approved of what he called a pithy version of Chapter 2. He recommended using Chapter 2 as a template as it gets to where the Planning Commission was trying to go with the document. Commissioner Knox stated the consultant’s version of Chapter 1 is still too historical. The chapter should show what we are doing with the Essex Town Center (ETC) and the document should be better connected and more cohesive. It should be written so the lay reader knows and understands what is being proposed in the ETC.

Commissioner Alden wholeheartedly agrees with Commissioner Knox’s comments. He stated he got stuck on reading the Executive Summary and kept losing his train of thought. Alden noted that he and Knox rewrote the Executive Summary and did not see that the consultants used it in the latest draft document. He did not believe the consultants have captured what the PC asked for in the document. Alden stated Chapter 1 was boring and it needs to get to the point quicker.

As far as Chapter 2, he stated the graphics came a long way and they are bold and much better.

A brief discussion ensued on the format of the document. It was decided that it would be printed on 8½ x 11 sized paper.

Paula Duke mentioned to look at the type face as white lettering bleeds all over pages. She noted Page 4 of the document is illegible.

Deb Ehler stated that she had the document printed out on 8 ½ x 11 at Staples, and she said it came out really well.

Sally Fleury had the following comments:

1. She asked if the Town was getting its monies worth from the consultants; and
2. How permanent was the vision as she has 2 problems:
   - ½ of the problem is in the commercial neighborhood and the other ½ is in the historic district.
   - She noted that the consultant put a PUD in the historic zone and asked why this was done if the regulations do not allow a PUD in this zone; and
   - She noted that she has enough water connection to place 37 units on her parcel, however because of wetlands, she could only get 16 units on her land. She asked why her neighbor, Ehlers down the road, can’t receive her remaining allotment. She stated that the Ehler parcel was better suited as it was located near the Circ.

Chairman Bruso stated that the PC was not the arena to argue the placement of the sewer core, and this topic belongs with the Selectboard. Ms. Fleury stated that if the public does not speak up, the issues do not get addressed.

The PC was concerned about condensing too much of the document and the potential for legal challenges. Also, the PC stated that they want the ETC boundary emphasized, more so than the Golden Triangle. A suggestion was made to overlay the ETC boundary over current zoning map.

The PC is in agreement to have staff continue with marking up the Plan, in an 8 1/2 format layout.

After discussions, the PC determined that they should not send anything to the Selectboard until they have accepted the changes. Staff will continue to make changes and present the entire document to the PC at a future meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM 5: MINUTES 2/27/20:**

Commissioner Daly MOVED and Commissioner Schumacher SECONDED a MOTION to approve the 2/27/20 minutes as written. The MOTION passed 6-0.

**AGENDA ITEMS 7: OTHER BUSINESS:**

Sharon Kelley reported that the brewery at 25 Essex Way, has requested to relocate its outdoor seating from the side of the building to the front of the building. Kelley felt this did not need a formal amendment as the seating remains the same. The PC agreed.

Kelley also noted that two Airbnb applications are going before the Zoning Board. She reminded the PC that they did not feel a site plan application was necessary for this type of use. The PC had no questions.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

**PLANNING COMMISSION**

By: ___________________________ __

Dustin R. Bruso, Chair

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