

**Brandon Planning Commission Meeting
October 21, 2019**

Board Members Present: Lowell Rasmussen, Ethan Nelson, Michael Shank, Stephanie Jerome

Others Present: Jeff Biasuzzi

1. Call to order

Michael Shank, Interim Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05PM.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Ethan Nelson to approve the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Consent Agenda

a. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes - September 3, 2019

A motion was made by Ethan Nelson to approve the Planning Commission minutes of September 3, 2019, as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Zoning Administrator Report

Jeff Biasuzzi provided a Zoning Administrator's report that outlined the current permits, suggestions for a change in the permit notification process and training opportunities. Mr. Biasuzzi stated his objective is to have the permit notices deferred to the property owners, which would require an amendment to the BLUO. The format would be the same that the Zoning Administrator has followed and is based on the premise that prior to the permit being issued, all abutters have to be notified. Mr. Biasuzzi suggested providing the applicant with a listing of all abutters' names and addresses for notification, with the permit approval pending proof of mailing the abutters. Mr. Biasuzzi noted Brandon is the only town where the abutting property owners are notified of every permit. In other areas, abutters are notified when appropriate municipal panels are involved, which is a statutory requirement and would be a requirement of the Zoning Administrator to send those notices. Mr. Rasmussen asked how many times the notifications result in an appeal being filed. Mr. Biasuzzi reported he has not received an appeal in the time that he has been in this position. Mr. Biasuzzi advised that the current BLUO requires the Zoning Administrator to send notifications for all permits to abutting property owners that takes about 8 to 10% of his time, with the average permit taking between 20 and 40 minutes to complete. A suggestion was made to send the abutters notification via email; however, it was noted that not all households have email addresses and this information is not readily available. Additional options were discussed that included the possibility of increasing the clerical time for maintaining the current process. The Town would save \$2500.00 or more by having the applicant send the notices. Mr. Biasuzzi advised that statutorily the Town is required to post notice of a permit in three places; by road poster at the permitted site and in two public places; the post office and the town office. Permits that have been issued are available for a year in the Zoning Administrator's office. Stephanie Jerome suggested that a postcard notification could be developed by the Zoning Administrator's office to serve as notification to the abutting property owners of where additional information could be obtained regarding a permit. It was suggested the information could be placed on the Town's website to include a link to the appeal form and a detailed description of the permits. Mr. Biasuzzi will develop a draft for the Planning Commission's review at the next meeting. It was noted this option would not require a change in the BLUO, as the statutory requirement of notifying the abutters in writing would be satisfied.

A motion was made by Ethan Nelson and seconded by Lowell Rasmussen to approve a change in the abutting property notifications process for permitting to be a postcard, which will refer people to the locations where additional information can be found; Town Website, The Reporter and the regular posting locations in an effort to create efficiency and financial savings for the Town. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Ethan Nelson will submit an article to The Reporter to clarify the change in the process.

5. River Corridors Update

Jeff Biasuzzi, Dave Atherton and Michael Shank met concerning the River Corridors. Mr. Biasuzzi has agreed to be the point person in Brandon regarding the River Corridors. Mr. Biasuzzi has had a conversation with the River Corridor Manager for the State concerning information about training available on this subject. Mr. Biasuzzi stated the River Corridor information should replace the Flood Plain information in the BLUO. Michael Shank will work through the final language with Ed Bove of the RRPC and will forward the document to the Planning Commission members for review. This item will be added to the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

6. Energy Plan and Public Hearing Process Update

Jeff Biasuzzi advised that Barbara Noyes-Pulling has requested the recently approved Energy Plan be incorporated into the Town Plan at least 15 days prior to the RRPC's meeting to allow the RRPC to review the Plan. Mr. Biasuzzi stated the Energy Plan was written as a stand-alone document and it could either be integrated into the Town Plan or as a stand-alone addendum to the Plan. It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to submit the Energy Plan to the RRPC as a stand-alone document to approve as an addendum to the existing Town Plan. Mr. Biasuzzi suggested reworking the language that is currently in the Town Plan to reference the Energy Plan as an addendum. Michael Shank will confirm with either VLCT or the RRPC the easiest way to complete the approval process.

7. Old/New Business

Michael Shank reported the Energy Committee held a weatherization workshop this past weekend that had a very good turnout. Mr. Shank noted Efficiency Vermont assisted in promoting the event through an ad in The Reporter and information on Front Porch Forum. Efficiency Vermont provided a presentation on the various programs and funds available to assist with weatherization. Energy audits are being offered by Efficiency Vermont. Some of their programs provide funding for services, equipment and appliances based on income eligibility.

Mr. Shank advised the Energy Committee is hosting an EV Test Drive event scheduled for Wednesday. Garvey Nissan, Alderman's and Green Mountain Power will be participating in the event.

Michael Shank reported the Select Board has requested updates from all standing committees of the Town every 6 months, as well as an Annual report. Mr. Shank will be submitting an update to the Select Board in October that will provide highlights about the Energy Plan, river corridors, signage and the permit notification process. A separate update will be completed for the Energy Committee, a sub-committee of the Planning Commission.

Going forward, the Energy Committee will be continuing with community outreach. Mr. Shank advised that Tim Guiles recently met with the Energy Committee to discuss the idea of developing an energy-related Revolving Loan Fund to assist homeowners with projects that include total home

energy retrofits. It was proposed the Energy Committee could facilitate the process but would not hold the funds. Lowell Rasmussen advised that when talking to the Select Board during the Energy Plan hearing, it was noted that of the three energy formats - solar, transportation and residential, the biggest challenge will be residential. Mr. Shank would be interested in the Energy Committee reviewing the applications but did not see the Committee building out the process. It is hoped that Mr. Guiles will pursue his proposal. Stephanie Jerome suggested contacting Efficiency Vermont as a possible contributor to an energy-based Revolving Loan Fund to provide seed money for low interest loans for residential energy upgrades. Mr. Shank will contact Efficiency Vermont for information on their model and will request Mr. Guiles provide additional information on his proposal. Ms. Jerome noted Brandon could become a model for the State in developing a program to assist homeowners with their energy upgrades.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, November 4, 2019 at 6:00PM- Brandon Town Office

9. Adjournment

The Committee Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary