

**Brandon Planning Commission Special Meeting - Draft
April 3, 2023**

Board Members Present: Jack Schneider, Bill Mills, Natalie Steen, Bob Foley

Others Present: Ed Bove, Jeff Biasuzzi

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:11PM by Bill Mills.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Jack Schneider to approve the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Approve Meeting Minutes – March 14, 2023

A motion was made by Jack Schneider to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Zoning Administrator Report

Jeff Biasuzzi reported five permits were issued that included a boundary line adjustment, subdivision, deck permit, sign permit, and an addition to a multi-family house on Franklin Street that would not increase the footprint of the house. Mr. Biasuzzi noted the building that housed the mental health facility on Franklin Street would like to change it to multi-family housing but is not feasible with the current zoning. There is consideration of turning this into a laundromat, but it could have easily been expanded to multi-family dwellings if there was not the restriction of the ¼ acre per dwelling unit. This property has been for sale for some time and there is interest being generated on the property. Mr. Biasuzzi stated VLCT has opened up a new approach to their website with the addition of a private email and password and reorganization of their directory. Mr. Biasuzzi provided information on joining their registry and noted any member of an appointed municipal panel can use their services. Jack Schneider asked if feedback has been received regarding a switch to a 10-acre town. Mr. Biasuzzi noted nothing has been determined.

Mr. Biasuzzi reported the Legislature has been making some progress with an Action Committee pushing Act 250 to give up some of its authority in going to a 25-unit threshold rather than 10-unit and no Act 250 jurisdiction for designated downtowns. The Natural Resources Advisory is pushing back on these items. Mr. Schneider asked if the Town has lost businesses because of Act 250 permitting costs. Mr. Biasuzzi was not aware of this, however noted that when dealing in real estate, some businesses would not consider Vermont due to Act 250 permitting costs. Mr. Biasuzzi advised Brandon has zoning and subdivision and could become a 10-acre town. In researching this topic, Mr. Biasuzzi noted that once the subdivision regulations were approved, a petition for a 10-acre town could have been applied for, but the Act 250 portion was not changed. There could be a change to the BLUO, however, approval of Act 250 would also be required.

A motion was made by Natalie Steen to accept the Zoning Administrator's report. **The motion passed unanimously.**

5. Energy Committee (BEC) Report

Jack Schneider reported much of the meeting was a presentation by Barbara Noyes Pulling from the Rutland Region Planning Commission about the Municipal Energy Resilience Program that could provide up to \$500,000 to weatherize and upgrade municipal buildings. There is also a \$4,000 mini grant that is available. An initial walk-through audit would be done, followed by a more extensive energy audit prior to funding for an energy project. Suggested facilities discussed were the town office, water department and fire department. The BEC will be recommending to the Select Board to submit the application for the mini grant. Additional discussions during the meeting were regarding the Davenport Festival and SolarFest. Mr. Schneider noted there are several volunteers working on various BEC projects.

A motion was made by Natalie Steen to accept the BEC report. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. BLUO/Town Plan Update Session

It was confirmed that the Town has a signed contract with the RRPC. Ed Bove of the RRPC suggested a review of the local maps to go through the different districts, review the dimensional bylaws and do a walk-around town review to determine some of the tweaks the grant is looking for. The grant is designed to improve areas and is built around housing and other uses in creating walkable places and equitable designs for pedestrians.

At the last meeting, Mr. Bove asked the Planning Commission to review the Town Plan as it is due for renewal in February 2024. Mr. Bove suggested devoting the next couple of meetings to the Town Plan, as the grant noted above has a couple of years and the bylaws are in good shape. Mr. Bove was not sure how much changes the Town Plan required, but noted an extensive public process would be required to make large change. It will be required to hold hearings in December for this renewal. In reviewing the Plan, Mr. Bove noted there are only deficiencies in habitat block language, but there is a map in the current plan and moving forward with the existing Town Plan would still pass renewal. If the renewal date is missed, there could not be any new bylaws enacted and the Town would lose State grant status. It was noted that a town is not required to have a town plan. Jeff Biasuzzi advised Brandon is designated a rural town, but didn't know the nuances of this and suggested checking into that. Jack Schneider advised there are numbers out of date, no information about the accomplishments that have been made, and no forward-looking goals.

Natalie Steen suggested there be discussion of making changes in some districts. Mr. Bove was not concerned about the data, but suggested going through the goals to get the Planning Commission to a point that is accurate and current. Mr. Bove suggested the Planning Commission, between the meetings, review the basic information of each chapter and come back with suggested language and someone from the RRPC could update the document. He noted there are 12 chapters to review in 7 months and suggested the Planning Commission take 2 chapters every month to review, while Mr. Bove worked on the data. It was noted the chapters are short and the narrative does not need to be changed but goals and action items could be done. Mr. Bove suggested Transportation, Flood Resilience and Energy could be done by the RRPC and that the chapters with the least amount of data could be reviewed first followed by the more intense chapters. Jack Schneider stated if recommendations are to be made, it does not give a lot of time to provide information to the public.

Jeff Biasuzzi stated looking at Chapter two of the BLUO, the language goes back to many versions of a suburban model and noted the language for each zoning district is important to review as there are limiting controls like the amount of land or number of parking spaces that are restrictive. He noted outdated rules are not providing adequate housing for growing communities. Mr. Bove reported he has gone through the districts and marked areas to consider. Jack Schneider stated if allowing another unit or two for the Franklin Street house that was previously discussed, there could be issues with neighbors and Mr. Bove advised there are performance standards for many things. Mr. Bove also suggested the Planning Commission review the first twenty pages of the BLUO and recommended doing a walk-around to view the districts that are in the by-laws. Some dimensional changes could be done quickly like setbacks, parking, height of buildings for the central business district, neighborhood residential and high density. The aquifer protection area is basically Forest Dale. The bylaw update should also respect how the Town was traditionally built and if there are a large number of properties that require variances, those specific areas could be tweaked. Mr. Bove suggested if the Planning Commission was agreeable, he could review the BLUO and provide recommendations to the Commission and all were in agreement. Mr. Biasuzzi noted the responsibilities of the Planning Commission are missing from the BLUO. Mr. Bove requested Mr. Biasuzzi provide him with recommendations that could be short-term fixes to improve the document as it relates to the grant. Mr. Bove summarized for the next meeting he will provide the Commission with recommendations for the BLUO and the Commission members will review the Public Facilities and Recreation sections of the Town Plan to flag any areas that need updating, with a focus on goals and action items. Natalie Steen suggested creation of a Google doc so that all members could make the changes on one document. Mr. Schneider asked if goals and accomplishments should be a separate section and it was suggested these items be embedded in the individual sections. Mr. Schneider also advised the BEC will be working on the Energy section with Barbara Noyes-Pulling. Mr. Bove stated to keep compliance, there needs to be new maps and standards, but all data may not be updated. He anticipates goals and action items changing the most. Mr. Biasuzzi noted when scoring the town plans, there is consideration of how the town has been able to achieve its goals from one plan to the next and helps to improve grant applications. Mr. Bove suggested this information could be placed in

the narrative of the Plan. Ms. Steen stated the matrix could also include this information that has been identified. It was noted battery storage should also be addressed in the Energy section.

7. New/Old Business

There was no discussion held.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, May 1, 2023, at 6:00PM at the Town Hall.

9. Adjournment

A motion was made by Natalie Steen to adjourn the meeting at 7:31PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary