

**Brandon Planning Commission Meeting - Draft
May 6, 2024**

Board Members Present: Jack Schneider, Natalie Steen, Neil Silins, Sara Stevens

Board Members Present via Zoom: Bob Foley

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Other Present: Jeff Biasuzzi, Nick Stark

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:07PM by Jack Schneider - Chair.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Neil Silins and seconded by Bob Foley to approve the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Approve Meeting Minutes

. Brandon Planning Commission Meeting – April 15, 2024

A motion was made by Bob Foley and seconded by Neil Silins to approve the April 15, 2024, Brandon Planning Commission meeting minutes, as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Article 8 - 2nd paragraph – a correction regarding non-conforming lots that the Planning Commission may want to look into minimum road frontage requirement, not minimum lot size.

4. Public Participation and Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Presentation by the RRPC's Nie Stark re: Health Equity Planning Toolkit

Nick Stark, GIS planner for the RRPC, provided a presentation on the Vermont Health Equity Planning Toolkit and the Regional Asset Mapping Project. The intent of RAMP will be to provide information to people both locally and those who visit the region to understand what assets there are, historically, culturally, and recreationally. It will provide a comprehensive picture of what people can do in the area. Brandon was one of the 3 pilot towns and the RRPC is looking to remove some items that were initially added and add some richer data that will help people with mobility issues, etc. The Vermont Health Equity Planning Toolkit was developed by all regional planning commissions and the Department of Health. Mr. Stark will provide the Planning Commission with a link for the Toolkit presentation. The intent of this item is to increase health and wellbeing in communities through planning. Mr. Stark will also provide a list of resources to the Planning Commission. As background, Mr. Stark advised that according to the CDC one's lifespan is more affected by environmental factors rather than genetics. He noted not everything will relate to Brandon that has done a fantastic job but the information is meant for the region as a whole. The Toolkit is to guide communities to healthier systems through planning and the key concepts are to assure everyone has fair and equity opportunities. The communities' planning role is strategic integration and to create an environment for all community members, especially the vulnerable populations. Some strategies are bylaw modernization to assure there is a priority of mixed use and the development of vibrant community spaces. Housing priorities are for accessible housing to support both the vulnerable and general population, to enhance walkability and provide access to transportation and recreation.

Mr. Spark advised the Toolkit has several case studies, citing one for Killington where they had addressed a severe housing shortage in doing modernization bylaw updates and easing the review process to foster equity and community

design. Mr. Stark suggested actionable steps would be to engage the community and include diverse community discussion. The RRPC does not have anything in terms of a comprehensive toolkit but will be a big element in the planning process. For some municipalities, it is about bringing the topics to the surface to assure that they are areas of priority and suggested for community engagement there could be offerings of childcare services, food, etc. to allow people who cannot usually participate to do so. The intent is to implement infrastructure improvements such as bike paths and sidewalks and fostering partnerships with local health organizations to assist with health equity initiatives. Mr. Stark recommended taking advantage of funding opportunities in the Toolkit. Lastly, he suggested monitoring progress towards health equity goals. Jack Schneider asked how the Planning Commission identifies the vulnerable population. Mr. Stark suggested many times the act of going out and making the effort to reach the population will put one in touch with these groups and being at certain events is helpful to engage with people. Mr. Schneider asked if there is an inventory of medical type facilities and Mr. Stark advised that currently they are focusing on historical and recreational areas. Mr. Stark noted the Planning Toolkit and AARP Health Equity hub are good sites for additional information.

Mr. Stark provided a video of the RAMP program that is a regional asset mapping project. The RRPC will be hosting a workshop to gather information to assure that each municipality provides feedback on where to direct people in their area and outline areas of historical significance. Mr. Stark will attend a future Planning Commission meeting to discuss the digital map that has been developed on what has been populated. The RRPC is also looking for additional input from municipalities. This project will be a marketing opportunity for local people, but also from a planning perspective, it will provide a sense of how assets are laid out, locations of sidewalks and bike paths, and where public transportation routes are to determine where they can be improved. The program will also assist with future grant opportunities.

6. Zoning Administrator Report

Jeff Biasuzzi stated at the last meeting there was discussion of minimum road frontage and provided an example of bad subdivision regulations, noting Brandon does not have minimum widths. Mr. Biasuzzi stated in coming to the end of the fiscal year, there is a total of 73 permits that have been approved, which is a 30% increase over the previous year of 56 permits. Mr. Biasuzzi noted there had been previous discussions regarding exceptions for zoning for municipalities and provided examples from Castleton and West Rutland. The Town of Castleton exempts essential services in all but flood areas and their new town office, police and fire departments were approved without having to go through the DRB with the Zoning Administrator reviewing the applications that allowed them to process faster. West Rutland exempts essential town services and the new language referenced State statute where appropriate.

Mr. Biasuzzi stated some changes that Brandon may want to consider is the LED open signs. In Article 402a, except for rural mailboxes and utility poles that can be built within public right of ways, Mr. Biasuzzi suggested fences need to be taken out as they cannot be placed within the right of way. Mr. Biasuzzi suggested there is language in the West Rutland plan that he would recommend with how to handle property line fences. He also noted that Brandon zoning does not address garbage, junk cars, etc. and provided language for this item. Mr. Biasuzzi provided notes from 2021 of suggestions to Section 407 and noted these are reference issues when discussing the sign ordinance.

7. Finalize BLUO Articles I, V & VI, Discuss VII, IX and Signage

Jack Schneider reported he contacted Logan Solomon regarding signage and Mr. Solomon provided examples of sign ordinances from Poultney, Killington, Wallingford, and Rutland City. It was suggested to pull the Sign Ordinance from the BLUO and make it a stand-alone document that could be handed out at the town office, along with the permit form. Jeff Biasuzzi advised he has a document that he provides with permits but noted that separate sign articles are commonplace. Mr. Schneider proposed from the input provided, he will draft a signage section for review by the Planning Commission at the next meeting.

Neil Silins suggested the Select Board eliminate the intermediate control and provide the Zoning Administrator with the authority to approve permits. Mr. Silins noted he has had issues with signage for the Farmers' Market as the rules make it difficult for this signage. He suggested providing approval for one to be able to put something up at the beginning of an event that will remain through the last occurrence of the event. Jeff Biasuzzi stated 24 V.S.A 117 does not give the Select Board authority and the zoning regulations are in accordance with State regulations. He noted during the Route 7

construction and Covid, the Select Board allowed soft banners and last year they determined that all had to be removed, and most have. There is a new invasive item that are the feather signs and they are not clearly indicated as exempt. Jack Schneider stated there was a question of businesses that have two storefronts. Mr. Biasuzzi stated there is an allowance per business and not according to store frontage. Mr. Schneider noted the DRB is awaiting the BLUO revisions. Natalie Steen suggested the Select Board revoke their sign ordinance and Mr. Schneider noted that some of the language could be taken and placed in the Sign Ordinance. Mr. Biasuzzi stated in Section 407, he likes that the zoning administrator can allow minor changes. He suggested a change to realtor signs to 6 square feet and noted that other towns allow more than two 21-day restrictions for temporary signs.

8. Set date for "Walking Tour" led by RRPC's Logan Solomon

For the upcoming walking tour, there were recommendations to start either at the town hall or central park and view multiple districts, downtown businesses, residences on Park Street and part of Franklin Street, commercial space like Walgreens and Hannaford, the old high school that is being proposed for multi-use, and review signs and flags at different businesses. Jack Schneider stated the tour could be a warned meeting or as an event sponsored by the RRPC. Jeff Biasuzzi suggested the Commission could advertise the walking tour to comply with the warning regulations. Natalie Steen suggested publicizing at least two weeks prior to the tour. Mr. Schneider advised the Energy Committee and Planning Commission will have a booth at the July 6th event. It was suggested the event could be advertised in the Reporter and the Chamber newsletter. Mr. Schneider suggested looking at a date in early June and noted he would send a Doodle Poll to the RRPC and Planning Commission members to determine an agreeable date and time.

9. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, June 3, 2024 - 6:00PM – Brandon Town Hall.

11. Adjournment

A motion was made by Neil Silins and seconded by Natalie Steen to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary