

Marshfield Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Public Forum #2

6:30 p.m. • Thursday, May 23, 2013 • Old School House Common

Members present: Jon Groveman, Julie Medose, Michael Schumacher, Faeterri Silver, Melissa Seifert, and Les Snow.
Member absent: Bob Light.

Guests present: Darrell Burkhalter, Timothy Morris, Jack Sicely, Barbara Sicely, Paul Sicely, Annie Reed, Barbara Bendix, James Arisman, John Warshow, Alan Cheever, Peggy Arthur, Rich Baker, and Jonathan Lloyd. Also present: Barbara Burkhalter (recording secretary).

The meeting started at 6:42 p.m.

1. Introduction and Survey Results

Melissa introduced the members of the Planning Commission (PC) and went over the results of the survey from the first public forum.

2. Input on draft of subdivision regulations

The purpose of this forum is to discuss the proposed changes to the subdivision bylaws and to get feedback and ideas on how to approach other potential changes to the subdivision bylaws.

Feedback and questions from people who have read the bylaws:

- What is the definition for “open land”
- Why is the threshold 10 acres
- What is “productive farmland”
- What about a small amount of open land
- Of the area not in conservation, how many people are actually affected
- Simple definition of “rural character”
 - Criteria are taken directly from the Town Plan and briefly summarized as follows:
 - When you’re driving down a back road you don’t see a house every 100’
 - When you’re driving down Route 2 you see a vista: the hills, the river, the ridgeline, the defined valley not full of development
 - The Village is a very defined section of the town
- What is “visual and functional relationship of structures to the surrounding landscape”
 - Best way to build, not whether or not to build, controlling not stopping (making better through the review process)

The PC will get some help from the RPC concerning the land use mapping and get definitions from the League of City and Towns and RPC. It is important that everything be clear for every towns person and the Development Review Board (DRB) and the PC will be focusing on things that lack clarity (natural resources, landscaping, rural character) and on the significant procedural change (minor subdivision [3 lots or less] deferral of any of the criteria if no building is being planned).

3. About our Town Plan, its mandates on the Planning Commission and actions to be considered

Michael spoke about the Town Plan and the direction the PC is taking to tighten up the subdivision regulations and five things the PC is tasked with by the Town Plan:

- The Planning Commission will examine the Town bylaws to consider incentives to create affordable and senior housing.

- Create an economic development strategy for the town that identifies and encourages development around the villages and growth centers, and explores other opportunities for creating jobs that require the skills and experience of town residents.
- Planning Commission to consider re-development within the Village District through higher density by reviewing the existing density of the district and comparing to current zoning regulations to determine if the regulations are overly restricting infill development.
- Remove the allowance for PUD's within the Forestry and Conservation District.
- Consider modifications of the boundary between the Agricultural and Rural Residential District and the Forestry and Conservation District (see Agricultural and Rural Residential District strategies).

People want to know what's going on in our town and the PC wants to get as much public input as they can and be able to create something that reflects every walk of life and different points of view. Some of the things important to people are: land for their children, utilizing the land they own, working farms, wildlife; balancing these and more while preserving rural character.

A participant voiced dissatisfaction with the lack of economic development and progress in the Village. He compared Marshfield to another town he had lived in that had more economic development and wished Marshfield could emulate that.

It was pointed out that the land use regulations are not restricting development, but rather it is basic demographics as to why there is not a lot of growth in Marshfield (it is a "bedroom community", 30 minutes from workplaces in Montpelier and St. Johnsbury). The speaker estimated that 80% of the people work elsewhere, so they are going to shop elsewhere, but other townspeople would like to be able to purchase the things they need right here in town and not have to drive 30 minutes to get those things, but there is only so much of a market in a rural area for a small grocery store, health care center, hardware store, etc.

4. Maps, future zoning and discussion on what to focus on next

Julie and Faeterri showed the current zoning map (adopted in 2009) and an aerial map (what the town looks like now).

A Village designation needs to be done and money is available through grants.

A subcommittee (focused group) should be put together for the elderly housing project. Some points brought up were that there is not much room, there would be need of a physician there, what are some financing possibilities, etc. The committee could get input from the Central VT Land Trust (CVLT) about local foreclosures.

The PC was encouraged to look into and understand the "main street approach", which is geared towards small towns and helps answer the question "what makes a commercial area work?".

Faeterri will get information from the RPC about statewide and regional resources.

The survey will be refined and mailed out to the Grand List.

The third public forum will be on Monday, July 8th, at 7 p.m. It was suggested that the PC invite the Village Trustees and ask someone from The Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) to attend. They were also encouraged to do a lot of research and get facts, input and information before the next forum (from CVLT, Counsel on Aging, downtown department) in order to answer the following:

1. What do you have?
2. What do you want?
3. How do you get there?

The next PC meeting is Thursday, June 6th.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara S. Burkhalter
Final, Approved June 6, 2013