

Marshfield Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

7:00 p.m. • Thursday, September 13, 2012 • Old School House Common

Members Present: Jon Groveman, Rich Baker (also acting as recording secretary), Julie Medose, Michael Schumacher, and Faeterri Silver. Members absent: Bob Light. Guests present: none.

Jon called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

The Planning Commission members reviewed and approved the minutes of the meeting dated August 30, 2012, with minor changes regarding the town plan approval status.

1. Regional Planning Commission Report

Michael discussed the potential merger of the CVRPC and the Central Vermont Economic Development Council. Cabot and Berlin town plans were also confirmed. The process and purpose of town plan confirmations were reviewed. The need for people to look up natural resources on their property was discussed. Rich will investigate how to provide a link on the Marshfield site to the ANR mapping web site.

2. Zoning Administrator's Report

None.

3. Review and discuss revisions to subdivision regulations

The Commission continued their review of the following draft subdivision design standards.

Section 4028: Protection of Farm Lands and Open Fields

In general, the consensus of the Commission was that there was a need to preserve agricultural soils and larger open fields. Jon will investigate and report back on some possible definitions for agricultural soils. The Commission also needs to still consider the size of open fields to protect.

The section was modified to read:

Subdivision boundaries, lot layout and building envelopes shall be located and configured to avoid adverse impacts to "prime" and "statewide" agricultural soils and other open fields of over 10 acres. Methods for avoiding such adverse impacts include, but may not be limited to, the following:

1. Locate building envelopes at field and orchard edges or, in the event that no other land is practical for development, on the least fertile soils in order to minimize the use of productive agricultural land, impacts on existing farm operations, and disruption to the scenic qualities of the site.
2. Cluster buildings and associated building lots to avoid the fragmentation of productive farmland.
3. Require vegetated areas to buffer agricultural operations from other uses to minimize land use conflicts.
4. Require access roads, driveways and utility corridors, to the extent feasible to follow existing roads, tree lines, stone walls, and/or fence lines to minimize the fragmentation of agricultural land and visual impacts.
5. Designate intact parcels of productive farmland as open space, conservation easements, or comparable site protection mechanisms.

Section 4029 Protection of District Settlement Patterns

There was discussion of whether this section was too vague and redundant with other design criteria. The standards are similar to the district descriptions in the Zoning Ordinance. Upon further discussion, the Commission decided to keep the standards with minor changes to better reflect the Zoning Ordinance district descriptions.

The section was modified to read:

All subdivisions shall be designed and configured to reflect the desired settlement pattern for the respective district in which the subdivision is located, as defined by the Marshfield Zoning Regulations and the Marshfield Town Plan.

1. Subdivisions within the Village Residential District shall be designed to reflect the historic character of the surrounding area. Lot sizes should be consistent with traditional densities within the Village, and building envelopes should be located to maintain a consistent building line and streetscape along public roads. Sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities may be required where appropriate.
2. Subdivisions within the Agricultural and Rural District shall be designed and configured to reinforce the district's rural character (as defined by the Town Plan) and historic working landscape, characterized by wooded hillsides and knolls, open fields, and a visual and functional relationship of structures to the surrounding landscape.
3. Subdivisions within the Forest and Conservation District should preserve vital wildlife habitat, opportunities for outdoor recreation, and forest resources.
4. Subdivisions within the Flood Hazard District should only allow limited expansions of existing development and should preserve the value of flood hazard areas as defined in Zoning Ordinance.

The next meetings will be on Thursday, September 20th where the goal will be to review the section on "Protection of Rural Character Outside of the Village Areas" and possibly complete the initial draft review. Rich will prepare a revised draft with any changes made to date in order for the Commission to finalize the draft language. It was recommended that the order of the sections be modified to be more logical. A joint meeting with the DRB is recommended and a Planning Commission hearing will need to be scheduled by November 30th in order to allow time for the Select Board review and hearing. The deadline to get on the March Town meeting ballot is mid-January.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Baker

Final
Approved September 20, 2012