

CHELSEA PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

JULY 27, 2017 MEETING

TOWN LIBRARY

Members Present: Ed Burger, Dickson Corbett, Susan Hardin, Neil Kennedy, Ed Kuban

Public Present: Sarah Burger, Doug Lyford

Called to order at 7:08 p.m.

1. The minutes of the June 15, 2017 meeting were unanimously approved.
2. Ed Burger led a review of the June 15th meeting. Part of the discussion on June 15th involved the importance of ensuring internet connectivity for all of Chelsea's residents. It was agreed to invite John Roy from EC Fiber to the August planning commission meeting and to ask for information about what obstacles remain to connecting all of Chelsea's residents and at what cost, and then to present this information to Chris Saunders, the representative from Senator Leahy's office who spoke at the last meeting.
3. Ed Burger led a review of the impact of historic building designations on the FEMA rules. It is possible that there may be an exemption for historic buildings from certain restrictions on rebuilding in floodplains. It was agreed that we should follow up on the precise legal exemptions and restrictions and check the proposed floodplain rules to see whether any exemptions are provided for.
4. A discussion was held regarding the need for an economic development committee, which was one of the recommendations made in the Chelsea Community report from about a decade ago. It was agreed to try to develop this as a working group of the planning commission and to invite local current, past, and prospective business owners to present to the planning commission and the working group about their experiences of running a business in Chelsea or trying to run a business in Chelsea (of all sizes including retail, home occupations, etc.) with the goal of identifying whether there are any changes or improvements that can be recommended. A goal was set of inviting past, current, and prospective business owners to the September planning commission meeting.
5. Ed Burger summarized his fact-finding trip to Hardwick. A summary of Ed's trip is attached to these minutes. It was agreed to invite Sarah Waring, the executive director of the Center for Agricultural Economy, to present in Chelsea at the town hall at a time other than a regular planning commission meeting.

6. Doug Lyford spoke about the need to improve flood resiliency in Chelsea. An engineering survey was conducted a few years ago by Dubois and King that identifies encroachments on capacity all along the First Branch and its tributaries. It was agreed that the planning commission should consider creating a working group to identify these encroachments on the ground, and to identify which encroachments might be amenable to eas(ier) remedies than others, and to seek grant funding sources so as to reduce Chelsea's flooding risk. Even if the reductions in flood risk do not lower insurance rates, there is worthwhile benefit to reducing the overall risk if possible. Dickson agreed to advertise for people interested in these working groups ahead of the August meeting.

7. TRORC is having a regional planning meeting on August 7th and August 10th regarding "required agricultural practices." Dickson will advertise on Front Porch Forum.

8. Dickson agreed to circulate the new proposed Tunbridge Town Plan to members for review on any potential impacts on Chelsea.

9. In response to a renewed invitation from TRORC for grant funding for writing energy siting regulations, Neil and Susan expressed an interest in undertaking the project at some point in the future, though not right now.

10. A conversation was held about the lack of a gas station in town. Neil agreed to call the realtor to investigate the potential for someone to lease the gas pumps until the business is sold so that there might be, at least, unattended gas service in town.

11. The August meeting has not been scheduled yet, pending conversation about John Roy's availability. The September meeting is traditionally held the 4th Thursday of the month instead of the 3rd Thursday on account of the Tunbridge World's Fair.

Adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

7/18/17

Notes on visit to the Center for an Agricultural Economy, Hardwick, Vermont.

We traveled to Hardwick to learn firsthand details of the successful endeavor to capitalize on food and agriculture in Hardwick as successor to the traditional dairy industry. The visit was to the Center for an Agricultural Economy and its Executive Director, Sarah Waring.

The overriding feature of the visit was a prominent spirit of cooperation. Some six, relatively young individuals (sons and grandsons of long-time farmers) embarked on a series of business ventures, all built around food and agriculture. They sought products of a value added for markets larger than the state of Vermont. Prominent examples were cheese, soy, vegetables, compost and seeds.

The Center for and Agricultural Economy is housed in a building containing facilities for preparation and storage of the final products for market. Partners share space and equipment for preparation of end-products. The staff offers assistance, advice for FDA rules, business practices, transportation, etc. The number of cooperating organizations ranges from 20 to 30.

The building was built with the aid of a federal grant from the USDA following the 2008 recession and the Resources Recovery Act (RCRA) . The cost was \$3.0 million. The annual budget for operating the Center is \$1.0 million from a combination of federal grants, private philanthropy and user fees.

The Executive Director is dramatic and a very good spokesperson for the institution. She has been in place for approximately 6 years. She is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about Hardwick's success.

Active contributing patrons currently range from 20 to 30. The Center returns to the town roughly \$70,000/year.

There are 5 to 6 other organizations in the state similar to the Center with varying configurations but, I believe, none of the same scale nor as successful.

Sarah Waring indicated that she would be very willing to make a presentation to the Planning Commission in Chelsea.

Ed Burger