

Town of Chelsea, Vermont

Planning Commission

2024 February 12 Meeting Minutes

Meeting Information

Planning Commission Members: Bob Brannan, Chair
Gregg Herrin, Secretary
Absent - Ed Kuban
Justin Sauerwein
Absent - Neil Kennedy
Shenia Covey
Absent - Susan Hardin

Selectboard Members: None

Other Town Personnel: Mary Ellen Parkman, Zoning Administrator
Johanna Welch, Development Review Board (DRB) Chair

TRORC Representatives: Bryan Kovalick
Kevin Geiger

Community Members: None

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order on 2024 February 12 (Monday) at approximately 6:30pm, at the Chelsea Town Hall.

Old Business

Prior Meeting Minutes

Bob Brannon made a motion to approve the draft minutes from the 2023 September 07 meeting and transmit those minutes to the Administrative Assistant. Justin Sauerwein seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

- Gregg Herrin** to transmit final minutes from the 2023 September 07 meeting to the Administrative Assistant.

Planning Commission 2023 Group in Microsoft 365

Gregg Herrin reminded everyone that some Planning Commission members had received email invitations to join a Microsoft 365 group named "Planning Commission 2023". He followed up with the

Administrative Assistant, who indicated that this was not anything that she was aware of, and should be ignored. This may be inadvertent, or may be an attempted scam, but all members are advised to ignore or discard such invitations if they haven't already done so.

New Business

Zoning Bylaw Modernization Services

TRORC representatives provided an overview of their engagement to update Chelsea's Zoning Bylaws (last updated in 2017) to bring everything up to date with current State of Vermont guidelines. Although the primary driver of this review is related to the housing portions of the bylaws, their review will include review and recommendations for the entire document.

The TRORC team reviewed the scope of work and responsibilities of the Town and TRORC. When asked about any current or possible consequences related to the current Zoning Bylaws being out of synch with State guidelines, Kevin Geiger clarified that there are no risks, since State law clearly takes precedence over Town bylaws. As such, the timeline for making changes does not have strict urgency, although the Town may choose to adopt certain guidelines immediately for other reasons.

Mary Ellen Parkman indicated that she has extensive experience working with Zoning Bylaws, having served as a full-time Zoning Administrator in Thetford. Based on her experience elsewhere and her familiarity with Chelsea's documents, she has a list of suggested improvements which she will share for consideration.

- Mary Ellen Parkman** to share her list of suggested improvements with the TRORC staff, for them to consider and compile alongside their own review and recommendations.

Mary Ellen Parkman noted that at some point in history, she believes Chelsea had districting similar to many towns' "Historic Districts" (maybe referred to as a "Design District") with special rules. Johanna Welch raised some questions about intent and enforceability, as well as possible conflict with floodplain guidelines. Kevin Geiger noted that TRORC will take this under advisement as they make their review.

Mary Ellen Parkman also brought up several other suggestions for consideration, including:

- Providing a specific checklist to guide the DRB during their review process
- Considering refined categorization related to business uses, to draw distinctions between things like working from home, a home-based business with only a few visitors, a home-based business with more substantial traffic, etc.
- Summary tables to make it easier to find information that is buried within the text (for example, for each district being able to see the required lot sizes, setbacks, etc.).

Based on all the feedback received and their own review, TRORC will mark up everything that needs to be brought to the attention of the Planning Commission.

- TRORC** to deliver a marked-up version of the Zoning Bylaws within the next few weeks, along with any other recommendations for the Planning Commission's consideration.

After changes are discussed and drafted by the Planning Commission, there will eventually need to be a public forum and a hearing (with proper notice) about the revisions, and then ultimately have the updated Zoning Bylaws taken to the Selectboard for their approval.

Next Meeting

Decision Summary: The next Planning Commission meeting will be on 2024 March 25 (Monday) at 6:30pm in the Town Hall.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:20pm.