

Meeting Notes

North Bennington Planning Commission

Wednesday June 21, 2023

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The meeting was held at the Depot office and was called to order at 7:00 PM by Co-Chair, Mary Rogers. Other Commission members present were Chris Damon, Kim Hall, Steve Lenox, and Joe Macbeth. Members Matthew Patterson and Bob Howe were unable to attend. No members of the public were present.

Mr. Hall requested the agenda be amended to include a brief discussion of Act 47.

Mr. Damon made a motion to accept the Minutes of the April 19th meeting with no corrections or revisions. This was seconded by Mr. Lenox and so voted.

Ms. Rogers discussed the open position for Zoning Administrator. The job has been posted in the Village, the website, and in the Bennington Banner. Commission members recommended no changes to the existing job description.

Mr. Hall discussed the status of Act 47. Changes being considered are intended to increase housing opportunities for everyone. However, the language is cumbersome, and municipalities need to know how to incorporate the vast number of requirements in their local bylaws. Ms. Rogers will reach out to VLCT and BCRC to see if guidance is available as to the timeframe of when the laws change, when the new text will be published, and what strategies may be advised for municipalities.

The Commission resumed discussion of Chapter 6 – 6.2.1.1 – Summary Use Table for Village Residential Districts.

- Mr. Hall noted concerns about not permitting a certain use anywhere. Mr. Damon pointed out that residential districts are specifically designated for residents and cautioned permitting uses that might compete with that goal.
- There was some discussion of short-term rentals and the differences between licensed and unlicensed rentals. A primary concern is limiting housing opportunities for permanent residents. It was concluded to make such rentals conditional for all residential districts.
- Other uses including professional, recreational, and retail were tentatively marked permitted with site plan review or conditional in some instances especially in VR-40 and VR-120 areas.

The Commission then looked at 6.2.2.1 Summary Use Table for the non-residential districts. Mr. Damon previously provided his thoughts on the table to Mr. Hall. These notes were the basis of the discussion for the evening. Extended latitude was given to various uses within the Industrial, Educational, and Conservation districts.

The Commission approved Mr. Hall and Mr. Lenox forming a subcommittee to draft details for the general and dimensional requirements tables.

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The next meeting is set for Wednesday July 19, 2023 at 7:00 PM at the Depot Office. The agenda will focus on Section 7 detailing criteria for Site Plan Reviews and Conditional Use Reviews. This section will be examined from the perspective of a zoning administrator to ensure fair, reasonable, and enforceable requirements.

The Rules of Procedure for the Planning Commission, adopted August 2022, will be reviewed, and re-adopted at the July meeting.

Mr. Damon motioned to adjourn at 8:34 PM, seconded by Mr. Lenox and so voted.

Prepared by Mary Rogers

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