

Vershire Planning Commission minutes for 5/11/2022 DRAFT

In Attendance: Bill Baylis-Chair, Bob Perkins, Nicole White-Fogarty, Eleanor Zue, Debra Kingsbury-Sec'y, Sande French-Stockwell-Dev Admin- Guests: Gene Craft, Justin Will, Reva Seybolt, Richard Amore- VT-Better Places Program

Bill called the meeting to order at 7:01pm. The minutes for April 13th were reviewed. Eleanor move to accept the minutes as written. Nicole seconded and all were in favor.

Richard Amore came in to discuss "Village Designation" and the advantages to assist with potential grant funding. The purpose of the program is to promote recreation, transportation, access in village/sidewalks among other items.

Nicole shared the Commission and Town's concern about the present cell tower in town not enabling our safety/emergency and highway crews to have cell service/communications as most in town have Verizon as their carrier. The tower now has T-Mobile antennae and AT&T is proposing to add their equipment by fall 2022. The Public Service Board has not required the cell tower owner to provide access to the town's Safety crews. Richard stated he might be able to connect to other sources, and that Broadband is a major concern statewide. However, this program doesn't address that subject.

Reva asked if the Better Places program impacts non-profit entities and municipalities. Richard replied that municipalities are not eligible for these particular funds but creation of non-profits and business entities are. There are some funds for tax credits up to 25K for certain projects and application can be made every other year to see if the project qualified for the funding. This year's application is due by 7/1/22.

Eleanor asked about the town building footbridge, recreation trails through the program. Richard replied that whether for this program or others, "Village Designation" would need to be in place, and our current Town Plan has that wording when TRORC assisted with the updates, and TRORC would be the ones to assist to make it official. Discussion followed as to how the TRORC map indicated the "village center" at present. The members stated that it should extend from Durgin Hill Rd to the Post Office. The question arose if walk-ways, flashing lights to slow traffic thru the village, might fall into the guidelines. Richard stated that commercial "anchors" were desirable and worth exploring. Richard went on to state that a cover letter authorizing the designation from the Selectboard and showing minutes from both the Selectboard and Planning Commission would be required and the support of TRORC. Notification confirming the Town Plan had the appropriate wording indicating the actual page number reference for the Village Designation, stipulating the area impacted, any historic district aspects (Church-Orr House?- other historic homes). Photos of the core of the Village would need to accompany the application. We (the town) needs to "Tell the story" for the need for updates and get staff recommendation from TRORC. Once designation is on place, it remains for 8 years and then requires renewal.

Side note; West Fairlee has gone through the process.

Richard went on to say that the Better Place funding is a onetime set-up that was created last year. They will do a 2 to 1 match from \$5K to a maximum of \$40K, and that Community/Public used spaces might qualify. No more than 1 grant per year, and the project outlined must be completed in a year. It could even cover things like concerts/music festivals up to 10K, but would have to start with “crowd funding” to have it in place for the required matching funds. Reva asked if a pavilion might qualify and when might the money run out? Richard stated there were 3 projects “live now” and about 10 in the works and that by 2023 the funds may be gone. He recommended that the town get its Village Designation asap and lean on TRORC for maps and assistance with the application. Get the topic approved by the Selectboard and submit as the review committee meets the first Monday in July and Sept. The grant applicant can’t start to raise funds until approved. Then the “launch” begins and must hit the monetary goal within 30-60 days to move forward. If then approved, 85% of the grant is issued, and 15% held back for the final close out with report and completion photos of the project.

Reva has agreed to be the “point person” for the Village Designation aspect to move forward. Bill Baylis-Chair made the motion for the Planning Commission to recommend that the Vershire Selectboard move forward with any and all paperwork to accomplish “Village Designation”. Eleanor Zue Seconded. Nicole stated she was in agreement, and all members present were in favor and the motion passed.

In other business...The Commission would like to request that repeater/emergency responders be added as a stipulation for additional equipment to be added to the cell tower, when going before the PSB.

Noted contacts for moving forward with the Village Designation plan... Peter Gregory at TRORC for the mapping.. Trail aspect information with the Cross Trail Rivendell could interact with Kathy Hooke.. For Historical building information contact Gary Goodrich from the Vershire Historical Society. ...Justin Will offered to assist with crowd funding when needed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.