

**Town of Vershire Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 13, 2022 at 7:00pm at Vershire Town Center building.
There will be a remote option for this meeting via Zoom or by phone.**

Attendance: Gregory Wilson-chair, Eleanor Zue-vice chair, Nate Thames, Justin Will, Bob Perkins, Sandi French-Stockwell-development administrator, Gretchen Harvey-secretary, Peter Gregory-TRORC, and Reva Seybolt.

Call to Order: G. Wilson called the meeting to order at 7:02pm

Agenda Review & Modifications: None at this time.

Public & Staff Comments: G. Harvey-secretary wanted the minutes to reflect her request that a member of the Planning Commission consider taking responsibility for the zoom/remote meeting option due to the challenges of taking good minutes and running tech simultaneously. She is willing to continue taking responsibility for setting up/taking down the equipment in the TCB to facilitate interaction between in-person and remote attendees.

New Business: Peter Gregory (Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission) introduced himself and provided a summary of the services and assistance that TRORC provides its member towns. TRORC is one of 11 regional commissions and is a subdivision of VT state government. Their office is in Woodstock and currently serves 30 member towns in its region. Although the region is large and the towns are diverse, the issues most towns need assistance with are very similar. Typically, towns do not have a lot of paid staff to oversee planning and development and given the anticipated opportunities coming via various federal and state programs, TRORC wants to be able assist towns in taking advantage of these programs.

Training: D. Kingsbury asked if TRORC has any online webinars or training videos available. P. Gregory said they have several youtube training videos and that their website is reasonably up to date. Contact P. Gregory for help locating them if needed. G. Wilson asked if a member of their staff would be willing to participate in a 4-hour session with the Vershire PC to talk about the town plan, the flood plan, and/or to anticipate future updates in the leadup to the town plan's expiration in 2025.

Act 250: There was some discussion about the oversight authority of Act 250 and how it might influence town planning. A good understanding of the town plan, as well as identifying any gaps or weaknesses within it, is a good place to start in re: the way it interacts with Act 250. In order for a revised town plan (2025) to receive approval, it needs to conform to any new laws passed since its approval in 2017. E. Zue asked about possible legislative changes that might be made to Act 250. P. Gregory explained that in the recent session, the legislature and the governor were not able to negotiate a compromise and so the changes proposed were vetoed by the

governor. These negotiations will likely come up again in the next legislative session. P. Gregory also noted that good public policy is not always popular making it especially hard to enact change depending on the timing of an election cycle. D. Kingsbury asked P. Gregory to summarize some of the key proposals that could trip an Act 250 review. P. Gregory replied that any commercial development over one acre will trip Act 250. Also, changing the use of properties that already have Act 250 status will trigger a review. Developing 10 or more housing lots or more than 3 lots in close proximity within 5 years can also trip the law. The state office in our region, and the staff that can answer questions, are located in Springfield. An Act 250 status is essentially a recorded lien that runs with the property in perpetuity. Vershire VFD has this status because there once was a commercial business at its location. This same status currently impinges on a local landowner who purchased a residential lot that was carved out of the original parcel.

TRORC Regional plan: This plan has a lifespan of 8 years. Future planning will focus on energy and housing. J. Will asked about the purpose of this regional plan. P. Gregory responded that it provides a guide for communities to do their own planning.

Vershire has a Development Ordinance that essentially serves a zoning function. It would be ideal to do an exit interview with the out-going Development Administrator to gather perspective on the Ordinance's weaknesses, if any. J. Will asked if TRORC supports synergies between towns. P. Gregory replied that yes, they do. Watersheds transcend town boundaries and are a good example. They also helped facilitate conversations between entities concerning post-cleanup uses of the Elizabeth mine site in Strafford. J. Will asked if TRORC works with economic development corporations. P. Gregory replied that yes, they often work with them, for example when assessing brown fields. J. Will asked about changes in housing within the regional plan and if Vershire can plan for additional housing. P. Gregory indicated that the Vershire PC can be involved through the regional commission and/or they can discuss the town plan with Kevin Geiger.

Old Business: Village Designation application: R. Seybolt summarized the effort to apply for Village Designation to date. It does not cost anything to apply for this designation. TRORC is available to help with the application process but because their current workload is heavy, it would be helpful if local volunteers would take the photos that will support the application. The Selectboard has already signed a letter in support of the plan to submit an application. TRORC also will need a copy of the SB meeting minutes noting its support. P. Gregory's recommendation is to draw the boundary as tightly as possible knowing that it can always be expanded later if a larger area meets the criteria. The overall tax benefits only benefit existing income-producing properties and therefore including residential properties or land that might be

developed in the future will not strengthen the application. Next steps include making a map of the proposed area, taking photos of existing buildings, and documenting the location of commercial properties within the proposed zone.

R. Seybolt will work with D. Kingsbury to gather the data on existing commercial entities in the proposed area. They will share this with R. Amore and plan to pull together the application for submission by Monday, September 6, 2022 when the commission meets next. **Action:** E. Zue moved to recommend to the Selectboard that Reva Seybolt take the lead on putting together the Village Center application with the Lister's help and assistance from PC chair, G. Wilson. N. Thames seconded. The motion passed unanimously. P. Gregory thanked everyone present for inviting him to tonight's meeting.

Approval of Last Meeting Draft Minutes: Action: J. Will moved to approve the minutes of the 6/8-9/22 meeting with some grammatical edits. G. Wilson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjourn: G. Wilson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05pm. J. Will seconded. The motion passed unanimously.