

Notes from January 3, 2011 Planning Commission Meeting

Since it was the first Planning Commission (PC) meeting of the month, there was open public comment period on issues not related to the other items on the agenda. Comments included:

- Concerns about the impact of extraction on the integrity of older homes and quality of life for those living in proximity to the activity.
- Someone that had to leave early wanted to mention that he liked the proposals to modify the General Business boundaries to instead extend the Village Mixed near South Street.
- Wanted to make sure that any if there was a proposal not to have gravel extraction in the conservation district, then there should be an exemption for forestry activities.

After Tom closed the public comment period, he mentioned that Noelle MacKay from Smart Growth Vermont would be leaving the organization to take a new position as Commissioner of Economic, Housing and Community Affairs in the incoming administration. For the project, he mentioned that Noelle had been working with Brandy Saxton of PlaceSense (who also worked with the PC on drafting the extraction ordinance) so there would be a seamless transition for this project.

Tom then reviewed the schedule for the various projects the PC is working. These include:

- Time in the next month to develop and review a draft poll to be ready for Town Meeting Day in March. The goal is to discuss this on the PC meeting on February 1st.
- Town Plan – This summer, Tom asked John and Sue, with help from Chico, to review the Town Plan for formatting, grammar and consistency. He wants to try and have the Plan ready for a November vote. Thus, he would like a draft plan for review for February 1st meeting. Tom volunteered to update the Land Use Section to make sure it was consistent with discussions surrounding the zoning updates that the PC has been working on. There was also a note during the discussion to review the extraction and quarrying language in the draft Town Plan as well.
- Otherwise, the PC will continue to move forward with working on the updates to the zoning districts. The goal is to complete the districts in and around the core and go to the public to touch base with them and get their thoughts on the work that has been done to date. Then move forward with the other areas, check in with the public and then work modifications based on public input. While the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) finishes in November 2011, updates will not be ready for formal public hearings until 2012.

Discussion of Mapping Options:

At the December 6th meeting, there were several boundary changes suggested by various PC members and after working with Noelle and Brandy, we had four mapping options to discuss. The area that we were discussion was labeled General Business under the original draft (May 2010) and it was the general area Bounded by 116/Lovers Lane, past south street and over to Basin. Much of this land around South Street is owned by the Lathrop family.

The options for consideration were as follows: (for the maps, go to quick links section of Smart Growth Vermont's website: <http://www.smartgrowthvermont.org/help/cpp/communities/bristol/>)

1. Original Option: this area would be zoned General Business. This district would allow for all the light industrial options, manufacturing, retail, automotive, etc., but not residential.
2. Alternative Option A: would change much of this area from General Business to Village Mixed. The triangular area between 116 and Lover's Lane which is owned by the Town would remain General Business. The reasoning for this would allow a natural expansion of the Village Mixed and would allow for a greater range of housing – from higher density housing (4 units/acre) to retail, business and Class

light industry. The General Business remained for the Town land as this was an area that the Town has always wanted to have their industrial park.

3. Alternative Option B: In this options, much of the General Business (except for the area owned by the Town) changes to Village Residential 3 which allows for 3 units per acre of housing. This is a district that the PC has not reviewed this round yet, but is a primarily residential district that allows little commercial, retail or office.
4. Alternative Option C: In this alternative, the Town owned land remains General Business, while much of the land between 116 and South Street is Village Mixed as well as some of the land on the other side of South Street. The smaller square of land was changed to Village Residential 2 that is also primarily residential and allows 2 units per acre.
5. Alternative Option D: This alternative is similar to Option C, except that the line for the Village Residential 2 is moved closer to South Street.

There was discussion by the PC and then it was opened up for discussion. Some comments are as follows:

- Jim Lathrop felt that it should remain General Business as there was a wellhead protection zone that was not accounted for in terms of what could be developed. There were no roads in this area and gravel extraction would provide these roads that could be used for future development once the gravel was extracted, and this area should allow extraction as gravel is a valuable asset to waste.
- Other members of the public felt that Alternatives A- D were preferable, with support of each represented.

After public comment, Tom polled the members of the PC and the results: 2 votes for the original; 6 votes for Alternative Option A.

Action: Brandy will update the map to reflect the changes.

Discussion of Extraction in the Conservation District

While the PC has not discussed the Conservation District, Tom did want to discuss extraction in the Conservation district in preparation for the Town Meeting poll.

The PC discussed allowing extraction in the Conservation District with and extraction ordinance that provided conditions to protect neighbors, or having an overlay district, or not allowing it in this district.

Some thoughts from the PC and members of the public were as follows:

- Chico and Ken felt that 'conservation' meant a wise use of natural resources vs 'preservation' that was more in line with the wildlife reserves in town. Both felt that extraction should be allowed in these areas.
- Someone noted that even if extraction was allowed in this district, anyone wanted to do extraction would have to undergo significant permitting requirements.
- Another mentioned that there were few areas for extraction in this district.
- There was a review of the definition of extraction and quarrying in the draft town plan and ordinance and there was an agreement that it needed to be updated to ensure that quarrying of rock was separate. The draft extraction ordinance prohibited quarrying within its provisions, but the definition of extraction in the regulations and plan includes removal of all types of earth resources.
- Sue had reservations about allowing extraction in the areas of the Conservation District closest to the downtown core that the PC had been discussing.

- Bruce, a member of the public, felt that good conservation or use of natural resources should be renewable resources – ie logging – were the resource could grow back and any roads could return to a natural state. He felt that gravel removal was more permanent and damaging and did not fit with this idea. He thought this was just “giving away conservation land.”
- Some members of the PC felt that an overlay district had already been dismissed by the public during the summer community forums.
- Kevin, from the public, wanted to know why the areas with gravel couldn't be mapped and only allow extraction in these areas. Tom explained that the maps that they had were a good estimate based on fly-overs, but not conclusive and to test and map where the gravel was would be very expensive for the town.
- Another member asked if it was difficult in these areas or not possible, why allow it in these areas?
- Another felt that this could be a “hot button” issue for members of the public.

After public discussion was closed, the Planning Commission voted and the results were 2 votes to prohibit around the downtown, but allow elsewhere in the Conservation Zone and 6 votes to allow extraction in the Conservation Zone, but have conditions such as in the draft extraction ordinance.