

# Bristol Planning Commission Update

September, 2010

## **New Town Plan overdue**

The Planning Commission has been working for a long time on a comprehensive new Town Plan for Bristol. State statute requires that the plan be reviewed and revised every five years, so until this work gets completed, we have been utilizing the much shorter, much less thorough and very outdated Plan adopted in 2001, which was renewed on an interim basis in 2006. The interim plan expires in December 2011.

Bristol voters decisively turned down the new proposed Plan last March. The overwhelming consensus was that the key issue needing more work was extraction. After the defeat of the Plan, the Planning Commission conducted a series of four facilitated open forums to try to better understand the basis of the “no” votes and to see if any consensus could be arrived at on issues raised and modifications that might be made to the Plan to gain more support. The forums confirmed that the issue that troubled participants was extraction, and in particular its proximity to the downtown, and that the community remains divided on the issue.

## **Bylaw review of Zoning Districts and uses permitted comes next**

Updating the Town Plan is actually only the first step in the municipal planning process. Once the Plan is adopted, the goals and visions of the Plan need to be incorporated into revisions in the bylaws, often include possible changes to zoning districts and standards within the zoning districts. The Planning Commission also needs to make sure there is consistency between districts and compliance with state and federal laws, as well as an appropriate reflection of community values, as established in the Plan.

## **Try a comprehensive approach on extraction**

The Planning Commission has decided it needs to gather as much input as we can from all parties and to focus on every aspect of the zoning districts and standards in the downtown and areas surrounding same, right now. While we do this, we need to see if we can figure out how to handle extraction in these areas so that we can write acceptable visionary language for the Plan and zoning requirements for the By-laws.

We are doing this **now** instead of after we finish the Plan because, while there is consensus that extraction should not be allowed in the downtown, there is much less so as to surrounding areas, with some folks wanting gravel extraction to be allowed and others not. Further, one idea, a radius restriction overlay concept, was not found acceptable at the recent forums. We know from the March vote that prohibiting extraction in the eight downtown zones, but not the other six including the large RA-2 zone, which comes very close to the downtown (and includes part of the Lathrop parcel) was not acceptable to the majority of voters. With this

in mind, we will seek to examine all areas and many of the sites individually. As we do this, the Planning Commission continues to be guided by the results of the 2006 community survey. However, we need continuing input and are considering a new and more limited survey or Town meeting poll focused on the extraction issue.

### **Where can you find information about what the Planning Commission is doing?**

We generally meet the first and third Tuesday of every month. All of our meeting agendas are published in the Addison Independent and now the Addison Eagle, and posted on the Town Hall bulletin board, at the library and on the town of Bristol website, [www.bristolvt.net](http://www.bristolvt.net). Our consultant Smart Growth Vermont also publishes information on our process at [www.smartgrowthvermont.org/help/ccp/communities/bristol](http://www.smartgrowthvermont.org/help/ccp/communities/bristol). We will also announce our meetings on Front Page forum. Once our minutes are approved by the Planning Commission, they are published on the website as well and are available in hard copy to anyone who stops at the Town offices. NEAT broadcasts our meetings and also makes DVD copies available at its studio and the library.

We have decided to create an e-mail list and send out all agendas, approved minutes and periodic updates like this one to any Bristol resident, business or property owner who puts their address on the list. Not wanting to limit this service to those who have e-mail, if a concerned citizen does not have e-mail, regular mail copies will be sent out at their request. Just let us know if you would like to be on this e-mail list or mailing list, by calling the town at 453-2410.

### **Regular meetings, Public Hearings and Community Forums**

Comments on the Plan and any matters of concern are welcome at the beginning of every regular Planning Commission meeting. Public Hearings are required by statute when a formal draft is ready for review and comments. In addition to these two devices, we intend to continue to schedule Community Forums to facilitate free and wide-ranging discussion. At this point, we hope to have such forums in November 2010, February 2011, and April 2011.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

Thursday, September 30th  
Tuesday, October 5th  
Tuesday, October 19th

### **The Bristol Planning Commission**

Tom Wells, Chair	Sue Kavanagh	Ken Weston
Chico Martin, Vice Chair	Stan Livingston	Willow Wheelock
John Elder	Bill Sayre	