

Planning Commission
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, February 12, 2024
6:30 PM
REGULAR MEETING
Final Minutes

Members Present: Michael Todd, Hank Ainley, Howard Beach, Brian Bosenberg

Ryan Gumbart, Land Use Administrator
Halle Abuayyash, Town Planner (Remote)

Others Present:

1 Call to Order

Mr. Bosenberg called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

2 Agenda Review

Mr. Gumbart suggested swapping item 6, "PUD Review Discussion," with item 7, "Dwellings Over Commercial/Industrial Business." The committee approved the request, and the agenda was adjusted accordingly.

3 Comments from the Chair and Land Use Administrator

Mr. Bosenberg mentioned that his current term is set to conclude in March 2024. He noted the necessity for reappointment by the Selectboard, along with the requirement to undergo the standard procedural process for continuation in his role.

4 Comment from citizens regarding items not on the agenda

There were no comments from citizens on agenda items.

5 Approval of Meeting Minutes: December 11, 2023 & January 22, 2024

The January 22, 2024, minutes were approved unanimously.

Mr. Bosenberg deferred the December 11, 2023, minutes due to technical issues.

Motion: Approved

Made by: Mr. Todd **Second:** Mr. Beach

Vote: All in Favor

6 PUD Review Discussion

During the PUD Review Discussion, the conversation delved deeply into how Weathersfield could enhance its approach to Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), drawing significant contributions from the attendees.

Mr. Gumbart noted that the PUD topic hadn't been reviewed for a while and introduced a table added to the documentation to facilitate the discussion, aiming to dissect various aspects systematically. Mr. Gumbart then outlined that the latest revision included a table for easier reference and suggested that since it had been a while since the last discussion, the committee could either review everything from the start or dive directly into standards, emphasizing the latter might be more critical at the moment.

Mr. Bosenberg proposed looking at other towns' bylaws for inspiration, finding them more streamlined and straightforward compared to the existing language. He mentioned examples from other towns that could serve as a model for restructuring Weathersfield's PUD bylaws.

Further, Mr. Bosenberg shared a primer on PUDs to refresh the committee on the purpose and intent behind PUDs, advocating for a simpler process for applicants and suggesting the idea of standard models for different zones to streamline applications.

Mr. Beach and Mr. Todd discussed the distinction between the Planning Commission and Development Review Board (DRB) responsibilities, highlighting the potential benefits and limitations of Weathersfield's current structure and contemplating a shift towards a DRB model to simplify the process for PUD applicants.

Ms. Halle emphasized the importance of defining percentages for open areas, shared facilities, and built-up areas within a PUD, suggesting that clear standards and examples could guide developers in planning their projects according to the designated land use and density.

The discussion evolved into exploring various mechanisms for calculating development density and open space within PUDs, considering different zones' unique characteristics and requirements. The committee discussed the potential for adopting a flexible percentage-based approach to define development boundaries, ensuring efficient land use while preserving essential open spaces and natural resources.

The conversation concluded with an agreement on the need for further work on structuring the PUD bylaws more succinctly and intuitively, including providing clear examples and models for different zones. The committee recognized the importance of simplifying the application process for developers and ensuring that PUD standards are adaptable, realistic, and supportive of the town's development goals.

7 Dwellings over commercial/industrial business

Mr. Bosenberg noted the correct agenda item for discussion.

Mr. Gumbart outlined the meeting's approach, aiming to work through specific topics and capture the discussion accurately.

Mr Todd referred to the bylaw review packet, which included new language proposals among 46 items. This introduction aimed to understand other towns' strategies for managing mixed uses, citing an article on the subject.

Mr. Gumbart detailed examples from Rockingham and Windsor, explaining their allowance for multiple principal uses on a single property through conditional use. He highlighted the necessity of addressing multifamily dwellings specifically and suggested possibly adapting Weathersfield's bylaws to better accommodate such developments.

Mr. Todd offered practical insights into the use of upper floors in commercial buildings for storage or other non-residential purposes, questioning the potential for their conversion into residential spaces under new guidelines.

The committee further explored zoning considerations, especially regarding properties with existing uses and the addition of accessory dwelling units or the expansion of commercial activities.

Halle emphasized the importance of classifying commercial and industrial activities within residential areas carefully. She stressed the impact of such developments on noise, traffic, pollution, and the overall community environment. Halle argued for a detailed consideration of the types of businesses allowed under the proposed changes, advocating for a nuanced approach to zoning that considers the varying impacts of light and heavy industries.

Mr. Gumbart summarized the complexity of implementing Accessory Dwelling Units in commercial or industrial zones. He underscored the need for clear regulations that address safety, compliance, and the actual utilization of mixed-use developments, suggesting continued refinement of the bylaw to align with community housing needs and practical implementation challenges.

The committee consensus leaned towards further refining their approach to enable dwellings over commercial and industrial businesses. They acknowledged the critical need for detailed planning, safety measures, and adherence to broader zoning regulations and state laws, incorporating Halle's emphasis on the careful classification and impact assessment of commercial and industrial activities in residential contexts.

8 Discussion of Items for Future Agendas

The commission discussed potential topics for future agendas. Mr. Todd suggested that the Chair and the Landuse administrator to discuss potential topics for the upcoming agenda, in addition to the DRB's Discussion and the Dwelling over Commercial/Industrial discussion.

9 Any other business that can be legally discussed:

Mr. Todd suggested discussing the housing issue with the legislators. There were no additional items brought up under this agenda item.

10 Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

Made by: Mr. Beach **Second:** Mr. Todd

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 8:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission will be Monday, March 11, 2024 - 6:30 PM, Martin Memorial Hall.

Remote option – Zoom link and instructions:

<https://www.weathersfieldvt.org/home/news/public-meetings-zoom>

To join any public meeting via phone, dial (929) 205-6099. When prompted, enter meeting ID 542-595-4364. You will not have a participant ID. Please press # when prompted to skip this section. The passcode for all meetings is 8021

WEATHERSFIELD PLANNING COMMISSION

Joseph Bublat, Chairperson

Hank Ainley, Commissioner

Brian Bosenberg, Vice-Chairperson

Howard Beach, Clerk

Michael Todd, Commissioner