

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

February 22, 2023

APPROVED: 3-8-23

AGENDA: WORKSHOPS:

BEGIN REVIEW - DRAFT SOLAR ORDINANCE

BEGIN REVIEW - LAND USE CHAPTER – MASTER PLAN

ATTENDING: Denice DeStefano (Chair) (via Zoom), Randall Kelley (Vice Chair), Elizabeth Seeler, and Donald Milbrand (Select Board Representative) and John Miller (Alternate)

ABSENT: David Shirley

OTHER: Christina Goodwin (Town Administrator) Joanne Bailey (Land Use Manager), Donna Sullivan (Land Use Administrative Assistant)

Chair DeStefano called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm with a quorum present in person.

NEW BUSINESS:

REVIEW DRAFT SOLAR ORDINANCE

Ms. DeStefano stated that the draft is a Model Ordinance from the State of New Hampshire, and that Mr. Paul Bemis of the Energy Committee has reviewed and helped to further craft this with suggestions that he felt made sense for Bristol. She stated the next step would be for the Board to review this document and make decisions as a group to create something that makes sense.

Ms. DeStefano continued by citing the section on Applicability on Page 1 referencing that other towns require a Conditional Use Permit along with a Land Use Permit or Building Permit. She asked if the Board felt a Land Use Permit would be enough or should a Conditional Use Permit also be required.

Mr. Miller asked if Mr. Bemis said why this was the case with other Towns. Ms. DeStefano responded that it was most likely to get the projects in front of the Planning Board. Ms. Goodwin stated that any commercial project would come before Planning Board anyway and asked if the ordinance was to apply to Commercial only and not Residential. Ms. DeStefano stated there was language within the body of the draft that may refer to both. She stated this included definitions and other sections that seemed to indicate applying to residential installations as well.

She continued to state that the Board needs to review definitions and see if they are in keeping with Bristol's needs. Ms. DeStefano stated that there was a need to determine when and if projects needed to come before the Planning Board and what districts these would be permitted, prohibited, or require a special exception.

Mr. Kelley stated that size of array may be a deciding factor for definitions. Mr. Miller stated that Mr. Bemis had provided some graphs and other information that could be helpful with information like size of the array.

He stated that his main concern for projects coming before Planning Board was regarding location impacts such as on Steep Slopes and he felt size or zoning were not the only issues for consideration. Mr. Kelley agreed that aspects of the property and location of array should be considered.

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REVIEW DRAFT SOLAR ORDINANCE, continued

Mr. Miller commented that this could be a consideration for the Conditional Permit option. He also noted that roof requirements stated may be contradictory. Mr. Milbrand stated that a Conditional Use Permit may be overkill and suggested a set of guidelines might serve better. He added that with roof installs, the Fire Department should be involved. Ms. Goodwin stated that as of now the Fire Chief must sign off on these and some earlier installed arrays are grandfathered. Mr. Millbrand suggested looking at Londonderry requirements as these could be helpful.

Mr. Miller suggested that a list of approvals necessary and the things that would require sign off might help, but was also concerned that it would also require inspections and have impacts on staffing etc. Ms. Goodwin indicated that a letter to the State would be needed citing approvals.

Mr. Miller suggested that this review be taken up in a one part at a time process taking into account the steps, structure, expertise, and professionals that may be involved in the process of installing a commercial or residential array and any impacts that might need to be addressed. He also suggested consulting with Eversource. Ms. Goodwin added that at present, the Fire Chief requires updated structural information for roof installs due to weight loads etc.

There was more discussion regarding the Steep Slopes impacts, Residential vs Commercial Installations and State and Industry requirements and standards. Ms. DeStefano indicated that the land clearing section on page 5 could be more detailed to cover concerns for Steep Slopes. Mr. Milbrand indicated the document focuses more on commercial installations verses residential and suggested clarifying definitions of commercial and separating commercial from residential.

Ms. Seeler asked about signs for electrical power panel locations usually required by the Fire Department. She asked if there would be a similar requirement necessary for Solar installations.

Ms. DeStefano asked everyone to review the Land Use Permit application that was displayed, specifically the section required for Solar projects from applicants, the supporting information necessary and sign offs from Fire Department needed to permit.

In review of discussion, Ms. DeStefano and the Board summarized the following issues for further review, consideration and changes:

- Board in favor of separating Residential from Commercial
- Commercial projects should be better defined to differentiate between individual use vs. sale of power and what might be the reference guide for these such as usage intent, acreage impact, kilowatt hour measurements, etc.
- Abandonment and Security for Removal paragraphs should be further reviewed to decide if necessary for commercial projects and looking to protect any possible future impact to the Town
- Listing of professionals involved for installation etc., inspections information and requirements
- Assessing any staff impacts and Fire Department review requirements

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REVIEW DRAFT SOLAR ORDINANCE, continued

Ms. DeStefano stated that it was clear more work was needed on this. She ask Ms. Bailey to forward the draft document to the Fire Chief for review and comment. This will be re-visited at future workshop meetings after his input is received.

REVIEW LAND USE CHAPTER – MASTER PLAN

Ms. DeStefano opened discussion for review of the Master Plan Land Use Chapter and work needed to update this. She suggested that all the photos be updated and the recent survey report will help to define a direction for this.

She asked Mr. Miller for his initial thoughts regarding survey response. Mr. Miller stated that he found nothing surprising with the responses to the survey. He was happy to see an increase in the number of responses from previous surveys and when taking into account the number of homes in Bristol to the number of responses it proved to be about a 14%-15% response rate which was good. He added that the Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) Housing Study was another important component for consideration before updating the Land Use Chapter. His take on the survey was that responders were in favor of the direction the Planning Board was moving in and referenced the high percentage that indicated maintaining the small town feel and balancing the tax base to services. He indicated he felt the Board's job with the Land Use Chapter was to layout Bristol in relation to what the residents want and with consideration to tax base and taxation impacts.

Mr. Kelley voiced his concern for impacts coming from bills pending at the State House and the need to address and balance continuation of services with diminishing revenue streams anticipated by economy. His opinion was that increased commercial development was going to be necessary to sustain tax revenue. Mr. Miller commented that Bristol was a leader in sustaining year-round commercial sustainability which should be considered as well. Mr. Kelley agreed that Bristol has a good foundation but saw a need for more industry. Ms. Seeler stated that she found it hard to find industrial space tenants. Ms. DeStefano added that the Land Use Chapter update should go hand in hand with Economic Development.

There was some further discussion regarding housing and the survey responses. Ms. Goodwin mentioned housing is a state-wide issue and mentioned a large complex being developed in Concord. Mr. Kelley added that consideration for any multi-unit housing projects should be determined by market because the low-income situation of renters usually sunsets at around 15 years.

Ms. DeStefano asked if the Board would like to wait for the release and review of the LRPC Housing Report before tackling the Land Use Chapter update. Mr. Miller commented that it is a sizeable chapter and that it might be better to work on all other aspects other than the housing section. Ms. DeStefano stated that LRPC extended the survey until the end of March so the report could be out by the end of May.

Mr. Miller suggested that next step could be getting together with the Economic Development Committee to understand its plans and collaborate. Ms. Goodwin indicated that in the past there was a forum with representation from all Boards and Committees and this could be arranged again. Mr. Miller stressed importance of meeting with the Economic Development Committee. Ms. DeStefano agreed that a Forum would allow for input from others. She mentioned that the Downtown Development Chapter was to be

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REVIEW LAND USE CHAPTER – MASTER PLAN, continued

revised as the Economic Development Chapter. Ms. Goodwin mentioned the Housing Mitigation Plan group and their work and wondered if this work would need to be included in the Land Use and other chapters.

Ms. DeStefano indicated that she will work with Ms. Bailey separately to get RFP's out for the Economic Development Chapter while the Planning Board works on the Land Use Chapter. She asked the Board to review and mark up the current Land Use Chapter with revision suggestions for discussion at the March 22, 2023 workshop meeting. Mr. Miller reported he would not be at the March 22 meeting and Ms. DeStefano said it could wait for the April workshop meeting.

MINUTES:

The meeting minutes of February 8, 2023 were reviewed. Chair DeStefano asked for a change on page 3 under the sub-heading of BRISTOL COMMUNITY OPINION SURVEY REPORT - the second sentence – to reflect that the full report would be posted on the Town website with all the survey responses provided and deleting all other references about Planning Board review and edits. Ms. Goodwin suggested deletion of the last sentence of this section as well.

With no other changes made, Ms. Seeler motioned to accept the minutes as corrected. Mr. Kelley seconded. The motion carried by roll call vote 5-0-0.

COMMUNICATIONS: NONE

REPORTS:

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION – Next meeting scheduled for February 28, 2023

SELECT BOARD – Mr. Milbrand updated the Board stating that prep and move of Police Department into Town Offices is underway and that the Public Safety Building Project contract was signed. Ms. Goodwin added the move is almost complete and that there are some new labels directing the public to the new Police Reception window and that other changes to phones etc are done. Mr. Milbrand added that budget purchases and solutions were made regarding trucks for Highway Department and other vehicles in accordance with the Capital Improvement Program Committee schedules. Ms. Goodwin added that there was some vehicle sharing and lending happening right now between departments.

CIP COMMITTEE – No scheduled meetings

CONSERVATION COMMISSION – Ms. Bailey stated that the Conservation Commission will meet on March 1, 2023. Their agenda will include review and any recommendations for the Planning Board for upcoming Land Use Permits for the Gallagher property at Pemigewasset Shores Road and the Public Safety Building project.

LAND USE – Ms. Bailey updated the Board about staffing in the Land Use Office. She stated that Shannon Bergeron started on February 13th and is a great fit for the shared Assessing/Highway Administrative Assistant position and catching on quickly. She added that it was great to have a full team.

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Ms. Goodwin stated that the Town has representation on the Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) Board with two (2) commissioner spots and one (1) alternate. One position is being served by Mr. Bill Dowey and there was an opening for another to fill a second commissioner position and another for an alternate. She explained that it is helpful to have full representation especially when there are projects affecting Bristol. She stated there is currently a New Hampshire Department of Transportation 10 Year Plan that includes two Bristol projects and serving on the LRPC is helpful for votes on projects etc. She stated that Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) also has one voting member and alternate position as well with Bill Dowey serving as a voting member and the alternate position open. She asked if the Planning Board, as appointing authority, could make recommendations for filling these positions. She and Mr. Miller talked about the meeting topics, schedules, and locations. Mr. Kelley indicated interest.

Ms. DeStefano stated that to her knowledge only one (1) Planning Board position was expiring and that was Mr. Shirley's. She stated that he indicated he would like to be re-appointed. She also mentioned that new Officers would be elected for Planning Board at the March workshop meeting.

Mr. Milbrand will no longer be the Select Board Representative after the Town Election as he is not running for re-election. It was expected that his last meeting would be March 8, 2023, and Ms. Goodwin will talk with Les Dion, his alternate, about attending meetings until new representative is selected by new Select Board.

NEXT MEETING: March 8, 2023

Ms. DeStefano stated the agenda will include the Public Safety Building applications, the Gallagher application, and the Goyette lot line adjustment.

ADJOURNMENT: With no other business before the Board, Ms. Seeler motioned to adjourn. Mr. Kelley seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0 and the meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Cote
Land Use Associate