Minutes

Meeting of the Middlesex Planning Commission
Wednesday, March 20, 2024
6:00 PM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, VT 05602

This meeting was conducted in-person at the Town Clerk's Office and remotely using the town's Zoom account.

Planning Commission Members
Nicole D'Agostino – joined at 6:07
Sandy Levine
Elle O'Casey
Mitch Osiecki

Ken Davis, resident
Randall Joslin, resident
Jessica Millard, resident (arrived 6:50)

Call to Order
Chair Sandy Levine called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

Roll Call
Planning Commission members Sandy Levine, Elle O'Casey, and Mitch Osiecki were present. Nicole D'Agostino arrived at 6:07.

Also attending were Middlesex residents Ken Davis, Randall Joslin, and Jessica Millard (at 6:50).

Mitch and Jessica attended from the Town Clerk's office; all others participated via Zoom.

Minutes
Elle moved to approve minutes of Feb 21. Sandy seconded.
Vote to approve: 3-0 (Nicole had not yet arrived).

Nicole arrived at 6:07.

Adjustments to Agenda

Nicole wished to add one discussion item to the agenda. She's heard from several people concerned about the amount of trash accumulating along the lower end of Shady Rill Road. Asked whether it might be possible to have a sign or two installed wanting of fines for littering.

Sandy responded that signs are under the purview of the Road Foreman. We can look into the possibility of putting up some signs.

On a related note, Green Up Day is not too far off.

Organizational Items

Motion: Mitch nominated Sandy to serve as Chair; Elle seconded.
Vote to approve: 4-0.

Motion: Sandy nominated Mitch to serve as Vice-Chair and Elle to serve as Secretary; Nicole seconded.
Vote to approve: 4-0.

Planning Commission meeting have been held on the third Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm, in hybrid format at Town Hall and via Zoom. By consensus, PC agreed to continue with that schedule.

Sandy noted that the PC currently has one vacancy, with Jon Leibowitz having resigned recently. Sarah Merriman will post a notice inviting folks to submit a letter of interest if willing to serve. Select Board will make an appointment once they receive one or more responses.

Old Business:

Neighborhood Infill Follow Up

Mitch attended the Homes for All Builders Summit last week in Barre. The event was very well attended, with nearly 200 participants from around the state.

Mitch received a follow-up email from Amy Tomasso of the DHCD, which he will share with PC members, and our October Community Infill attendees. The DHCD has made available an electronic copy of the Homes for All Toolkit introduced at the Summit.

In the coming months the DHCD will be adding additional resources and tools on their website, which will be shared with attendees. It also sounds like personnel from the department might be available to assist if we were to organize some sort of Homes for All discussion or event in our community.

Mitch will also share the Homes for All Toolkit info with the residents on our mailing list form our October event. It might be worth seeing if there's an appetite for more discussion of this topic.

Elle agreed that an event within the community might be well received.

Mitch suggested that we could set up a table to share information and/or invite inquiries at some of the Bandstand Concerts in July and August.

Bear Education

We are planning to offer some information on coexisting with bears at the Middlesex Energy Fair on April 27.

Elle reached out to F&W – no one available to attend the Energy Fair, but they will provide some informational handouts.

Additionally, F&W suggested we contact folks at CVSWMD. Elle has already done so, but received no response. Will try again.

Are there any Middlesex residents who have expertise in this topic? John Austin was mentioned.

Elle will prepare some short posts for Front Porch Forum.

Sandy will reach out to Dave Shephard to see if he can help out.

Walking Trails near Rumney

Previous attempt at scheduling a community discussion fell through due to a scheduling conflict at Town Hall. Will try to reschedule later this spring.

Mitch will check with Rumney to see if we might be able to use that facility – seems like the people most interested likely live near Rumney anyway.

Might consider inviting some of the following: Select Board members, Road Foreman, Road Commissioner.

Most likely date for this meeting would be at our May meeting.

Road Planning Discussion

There continue to be lots of discussion and concern about the condition of roads in town.

A frequently raised item is whether more can be done to plan for better road maintenance, including flood-related resiliency.

A few (5-10) years ago, there was an effort made to identify several persistent “trouble spots” in town, and extensive work was done to rebuild some of those road section. The general consensus seems to be that those areas appear to have held up well and that that exercise might be worth repeating.

Sandy noted that the Select Board has indicated an interest in establishing an ad hoc committee to research road issues and potential solutions.

Since the SB already has a lot of projects to manage, it seems likely that they’ll be happy to have the ad hoc committee dive into this research. Sandy plans to attend a SB meeting in early April and will offer that the PC is willing to assist the ad hoc committee in any way that makes sense for all concerned.

Nicole noted that she like the idea of both some short-term and long-term planning.

Mitch noted that the Road Crew does have something like a five year maintenance schedule, but that schedule doesn’t consider upgrades to trouble spots. Also noted that the five-year maintenance schedule can quickly be overwhelmed by catastrophic events like last July’s flooding.

Resident Jessica Millard arrived, interested in the discussion of road maintenance. Sandy recapped discussion points.

Sandy advised that she will be attending the Select Board meeting on April 2 to discuss options and offer the services of the Planning Commission to this effort. If practical to do so, Sandy will try to follow up with a brief post on Front Porch Forum.

Elle suggested that the ad hoc committee might emulate the process followed by the Town Hall Renovation committee. Sandy served on that committee and agreed that the work went smoothly.

Ken Davis asked what he role of the PC might be with respect to improving road conditions and planning for improvements to town road infrastructure.

Sandy responded that the PC will support the Select Board. We assume the SB will welcome our support, but it’s a bit early to predict exactly how we’ll be best able to help.

Comment was made that it’s important to strike a balance between education and learning what people want, and what those “wants” will cost.

Mitch noted that, in addition to increasingly erratic weather, we have in recent years seen much more traffic in the form of delivery vehicles as people turned increasingly to online shopping during the pandemic. It’s hard to imagine people will abandon the convenience of shopping online. Those vehicles make lots of trips up and down our roads, and they are larger and heavier than automobiles.

Ken added that personal vehicles are also getting larger, and people tend to drive faster all the time, increasing wear on roads.

Other Business

Project List Update

Sandy has once again updated several of the items on our Project List.

Correspondence

In addition to the email from Ken Davis that Sandy shared in advance of this meeting, she's received a few other notes echoing concern for road maintenance and safety.

Next Meeting

Wed, April 17 – regular monthly meeting. 6:00pm and hybrid format -- Zoom or in-person at Town Hall.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mitch Osiecki
Planning Commission secretary emeritus