

Town of Guilford
Planning Commission Meeting Agenda and Notes
16 April 2014

Members present: Tanya Balsley, Chuck Clark, Harry Evans, Michelle Frehsee, Jackie Gaines, Hal Kuhns, Sheila Morse (Herb was absent; Tanya left after a short while)

The meeting was convened at the Broad Brook Grange. Multiple attempts to reach residents via various media, inviting them to be informed and provide feedback, resulted in perhaps 50 participants.

Call to order – 7:00 pm

Recognition of Public was made, noting the Planning Commission's appreciation for the turnout and reminding attendees that our meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month, starting at 7:00 pm, in the Town Offices.

New Business

Members introduced themselves and briefly noted his or her particular focus on the commission, introduction to our Town Plan process, and how we're incorporating the will of the Town residents (Tanya — land conservation, bring the plan to Town residents to make it accessible, user friendly, etc.; Hal — general interest; Sheila – tying things together from all the different sources of information and resources in preparing the draft; Michelle — the scholar; Jackie — plays devils advocate on the board, has passionate interests in what's going on!; housing is her topic; Harry — agriculture and agricultural land use is his major concern and Recreation; Chuck's appreciates.)

In the introduction to the planning process and status update by Michelle Frehsee (Planning Commission Chair) it was made clear that the members understand that they serve and work to represent the will of the Town as clearly as possible, not their individual interests.

Michelle went through the Forum Talking Points (see separate document).

The floor was opened for **questions and discussion**. Points raised for the Commission's consideration include:

The **Recreation Club**, per Lee Brunswick, is holding its annual meeting on 4/29 at the Ball field
Sweet Pond, per Betty Frye and Susan James, is a concern. Susan reported that Mike Hebert is on top of the situation and that the Sweet Pond Steering Committee will be working with a representative of VT Parks and Recreation in the coming week.

Also on the topic of Recreation (and the Town's **economy**), Rick Zamore suggested that we consider mapping Town Trails and class 4 roads, considering them an economic engine for the town. Trail maps will attract users to the Town and boost our economy.

Rick applauded the efforts of the current Planning Commission to **capture the will of the Town**. He said the work of the former Commission went the other way; they proposed a zoning bylaw, and were successful in getting people to come out and vote against it.

Betty F. voiced concern about **housing for the elderly** and for **proactive plans for solid waste disposal**, noting that State law is changing and that the more we come together as a community on these two issues (and Sweet Pond) the more support we will get from the State.

Harry Evans noted the different community **solar energy projects** going up in various towns and asked if we should be having a discussion about this topic in Guilford. (One person commented he'd rather see wind mills.)

It was generally agreed that the PC will **post the topics of its monthly meetings** when warning of the meetings and invite the public to come and voice their opinion.

Lise Sparrow noted that we are not turning our attention to **low income people and their needs**, reminding us that the hateful discriminatory behavior that galvanized many in the community a few years ago uncovered alarming information about this group. She did not go into further details.

Rick Z. reminded us that the **Town Plan** is a reference for any sort of Act 250 issues. If we don't want more development in Algiers or on rural roads we need to state so in the Plan. The State has been tough on Town Plans requiring specific language that can be referred to and that will have weight in an Action 250 hearing. Specifically, language such as "shall not or will not" must be part of text.

Eric Morse also noted that the **Town Plan** is an important document for anyone who wants to do a project in town. Friends of Algiers took the plan into consideration before they went forward with Algiers' Village Center designation, concerned that the application conformed to Town Plan. The Plan allows people to apply and qualify for grants and Act 250 permits more easily.

Al Franklin, Jr. and Lynn Latulippe asked when we were going to discuss **Algiers**, Al noting that he does not want to see Algiers become S. Brattleboro and Lynn wondering what the plans for Algiers's Center were. *Subsequently Sheila and Michelle discussed creating a Q and A communication about the Village Center designation process for Guilford Center and distributing it to the Town, perhaps including information that Eric Morse shared with Michelle about the decision to go ahead with the Algiers' designation...*

Sara Coffey and Katie Buckley brought up the issue of **high-speed internet**, noting that the situation in Guilford is deplorable and constitutes a major hindrance to the success of

any small business, especially home-based, enterprise. Katie asked that we explore the Fiber Connect Project status and plans.

Updates by VCRD Task Forces

Carl Hirth, who is not a resident but has been coming to Guilford for years and chairs the **Guilford Community Church Task Force**, gave an update on their work to date. He noted that there have been three main changes since January:

1. Windham Childcare Association no longer works with the Church. Their goal now is to consolidate their childcare services and offices in one place. Although the childcare program has pulled out, Guilford Cares is a possible partner in their expansion. Elly Majonen noted that, although Windham Child Care has pulled out of current project it doesn't mean the church has given up. Katie Buckley noted that we need to include the School Board and the Guilford Central School in exploring childcare issues for the Town. Lynn Latulippe wondered which population a childcare center at the church would serve (asking if it would be for Brattleboro). Lise Sparrow (pastor) advised that there is no childcare service in Guilford for residents and invited Lynn to meetings that focus on this issue.
2. The Church bought the Wood property next door to it (trailer and the lot) at an auction. The use is not fully determined but it could be used for additional parking needs.
3. They had planned a feasibility study and applied for a grant but were not successful. The next step is to meet with the consultants who helped the Newfane Community Church. The Church's vision is to have a community center with multiple services, including childcare. There are already many services. (Carl had a handout listing a wide range of church-related, community, and rental activities.)

Doug McRae, Small Business Incubator Space Task Force member mentioned that they are looking at how an incubator space might work in Guilford where small business might have services available.

Sara Coffey, Redevelop the Grange as a Community Center Task Force advised that the task force is meeting on a monthly basis. They set up simple goals to start, e.g., a social gathering (Spring Fling dance); and the community work day 4/26; they post activities on FPP forum; the task force is trying to resolve the conflict between being a fraternal order and securing 501(c)3 status.

The last major topic of the meeting was the Town's application for **Village Center Designation for Guilford Center** which the Select Board asked the Planning Commission to pursue. Michelle reported that members of the Selectboard and the Planning Commission attended a presentation by Richard Amore and then walked Guilford Center (from the museum to just beyond the Grange.) She noted that Village Center designation will help with maintenance of the historical buildings and the Grange; will qualify us for grant consideration for projects; would help preserve and maintain the center as it is, and could provide tax credits for renovations to historic properties. The issue of tax credits was not well understood but seemed to raise concerns that Guilford residents' tax basis might be increased due to the impact of a village designation. This is not true. For more information on tax credits, visit:

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/funding/downtown_village_tax_credit

Eric M. stated that the Town Office and the school should be included in the Village Center boundary map. Michelle explained that (a) at this point the State will not accept such extensive boundaries but that we can always apply to extend the boundaries later on.

Lise S. and Rob Hinrichs asked “what are the downsides” and were advised — none.

Katie mentioned her deep passion for our historic structures; our NE history and noted that one of our biggest challenges is to manage the expense of preserving and maintaining these buildings. If we have programs available to us that allows us to restore historic buildings then this will be a boon for all our active and dedicated volunteers to keep their historic buildings alive and actively used.

Hal confirmed that we’re not taking about housing developments in the Center: there is insufficient land within the boundaries and no water or sewer systems. We are NOT talking about making development possible, just trying to prevent the one kind of change that we can’t stop — the deterioration of these buildings.

Elly asked if the library, the meeting house, the historical society, the old school house, and the Grange will fall in this area. The answer was yes, along with three historic homes.

Rick encouraged the Commission to refute the erroneous Commons article with another Reformer article, noting that village designation sounds like development housing, etc. and saying that we need to let people know that’s not what’s taking place. Laura and Jackie agreed; need to put out more information. Put it in FPF, back in Reformer, town clerk, online...

Katie noted that Village Center designation center applications were encourage in the 2010 Town Plan and that this topic was not a new one; she suggested that people refer to Select Board Meeting minutes!

Adjournment of public meeting – 8:30 pm. (The commission members appreciated the applause!)

Reminders:

Next working meeting will be Wednesday, May 7 at 7 pm in the Town Office. Next regular scheduled public meeting, Wednesday, May 21 at 7 pm in the Town Office