

Montgomery Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes: Feb 8th, 2022

Meeting called to order at 6PM

Present: Kenny Miller, Barry Kade, Peter Locher, Joe Sherman, Alissa Hardy (arr 7:15)

Visitors: Greta Brunswick (Senior Planner/Northwest Regional Planning Commission Vermont), Parma Jewett (DRB), Sue Wilson (DRB), Mary Garceau (DRB Alt), Ellen Fox (Montgomery Zoning Administrator)

Agenda

1. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda. None
2. Approval of Jan 25th meeting minutes. 4 Yeas, Alissa absent for vote
3. Bylaw Modernization Grant

Greta updated the commission on the status of the Bylaw Modernization Grant

- St Albans the lead town and grouped with Sheldon, Enosburg, Highgate and Montgomery
 - fully funded @ \$36,400
 - Partnering with Northwest Regional Planning Commission to address the region's need for smaller homes at affordable rates demanded by smaller households that make up today's workforce. The project will hold discussions on region's housing needs, audit existing regulations, and work with the five Planning Commissions to develop draft regulations that reduce regulatory barriers towards housing choice and affordability
 - Greta estimates that her initial/preliminary report identifying potential solutions to housing need (based on existing data) will be finalized by end March. Bylaw audits will be addressed. There is a \$662 match if we don't adopt the language of the report; match waived if we do.
4. Short-Term Rentals (STR)
 - The issue was defined as the unrestricted growth of STR consuming affordable housing inventory needed for residential use
 - Discussion ensued as to how we might best regulate and/or restrict the continued growth of STRs
 - Registry: the consensus of all present was that there is a need to register STRs that operate in our town's 2 hamlets. This was agreed to be an initial priority before imposing other potential requirements on STRs. Greta felt it would be productive to determine the number of STRs as a percentage of total available housing as a baseline. Sources available to us to identify STRs that do not voluntarily register with us are AB&B websites to see who is offering STRs in Montgomery as well as simple observation of rental activity (turnover, etc). Once a reasonable registry is established, we can better consider regulation and enforcement. Greta suggested that we consider the Vermont statute Title 24, Chapter 117 as one basis of preparing a local ordinance.
 - Discussion on how to regulate volleyed between ordinance and zoning bylaw. Greta held the opinion that ordinance is the better path vs zoning restrictions. Ellen noted that we need to better define STR from a zoning perspective as the current language does not clearly identify differences between typed of lodging.
 - Discussion on (existing and possible additional) restrictions included occupancy/bedroom, limiting outdoor camping, parking limits, enforcing noise and other ordinances and adherence to fire safety rules. Minimum requirements should be fire inspections prior to granting conditional use.

- Enforcement: some discussion on enforcement, specifically how to/who would enforce any restrictions and/or requirements needed to operate a STR. The two enforcement avenues of focus were the Town Constable and the Zoning Admin.

5. Action Steps

- DRB will compile a draft list of guidelines they feel would be needed to more effectively control conditional use to comply with the Town Plan
- A team from the Planning Commission be assigned to investigate how other [resort] towns are addressing the issue of runaway STR growth and report back at next meeting. Barry and Peter volunteered and need to briefly discuss plan of approach prior to gathering information.
- Greta will prepare and send her [personal/confidential] notes from tonight's meeting to Joe Sherman to distribute to the Planning Commission. She requested that Joe be the point person between the Planning Commission and the Greta.
- Planning Commission will draft an ordinance to regulate/restrict STRs for commission review prior to presenting to the Selectboard

Other Business: continued dialog on potential zoning changes in Con I and/or Con II zones to better support the Town Plan's objective of maintaining the rural and environmentally responsible character of Montgomery

New Business: see 'Action Steps' above.

Motion to adjourn made by Kenny, seconded by Peter. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:52PM

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Locher (Secretary for February meeting)