

Montgomery Planning Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

Public Safety Building

December 12th, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

Present: Peter Locher, Alissa Hardy, Barry Kade & Gwen S.

Guests: Ellen Fox (Town Zoning Administrator)

Meeting called to order at 6:02pm

1. Additions / Deletions to the Agenda

- a. Addition: Secretary Role
- b. Addition: PC budget 2024
 - i. Regional planning grant, PC would like an update - discuss current billing vs budget

2. Approval of the November 14th 2023 Meeting Minutes

- a. PC discussed matching the format of other town groups. No longer shall PC issue draft minutes replaced by final minutes. Changes to prior minutes will be addressed in the minutes of the following meeting at time of approval.
- b. Barry motioned to approve November minutes with the following changes/clarifications:
 - i. Clarification, the noted date typo refers to a typo of the date the draft plan cover page
 - ii. Change, typo on the last page under Attachments, 2nd to last word - change "down" to "town"
 - iii. Change, Under 3. vi. Change item:
 1. As was written "Emily noted - Site plan reviews can be done by a ZA or a DRB, if the criteria is ministerial it can be done by the ZA."
 2. Change to ". . . can be done by a ZA or a DRB. Barry noted that if the criteria for review is ministerial it can be done by the ZA."

- iv. Alissa 2nd approval with above changes/clarifications, approved 3-0

3. Missisquoi River Basin Association

- a. Ellen provided PC with update regarding Missisquoi River basin association, (MRBA). MRBA is actively working in Montgomery on a number of projects. Specifically, near/at the Barnards property, the woody project bank stabilization project is underway. Project includes the addition of natural woody material in the river to reduce river velocities. Reduced velocities drops sediment and reduce erosion downstream. EPA, federal funds to reduce phosphorus going into Lake Champlain funds this project.
 - i. Montgomery Conservation commission has been part of recent projects too, such as offering swimming hole clean up and community events. Also recreation area development/ events are in in the works.
 - ii. They are looking for a spot to grow bare root tree seedlings to support tree needs in other projects. They are looking for 6-7 acres for tree planting. And would like the proposed spot to be similar soil type as riparian/ waterway soils to ensure success of transplantings. This is a nationwide problem, 1/10th of the trees needed are available right now.
 - iii. Barry asked what kind of trees - Ellen answered with a need for willows, speckled alders, cedars, red maples, white pines, dogwoods.
 - iv. Peter asked for a time frame - Ellen noted 1-2 ft trees are ideal, ie. within a couple of years. The younger they are transplanted the better for these riparian trees.
 - v. Ellen shared propagations come from cuttings, layering and seeds. Ellen noted it would be nice to create a stock from seed to create genetic variability to make a more disease resilient inventory over time.
 - vi. Ellen shared there already is funding for a greenhouse, even nursery staff for a few years - with goal to turn the project into a business for someone to purchase/run/own in the future. Land conveyance would be organized in the future.
 - vii. Barry asked if land in conservation may be available - Ellen noted there may be but there has not yet been enough movement forward. They would like to get trees in the ground by spring. Ellen wanted to let PC know & to share the opportunity and see if there were any ideas for viable properties for the project.

4. Zoning Administration / Zoning Regulations Feedback

- a. Ellen, being Montgomery's ZA shared with PC notes regarding the current gaps in the zoning regulations, especially around river corridors. Ellen shared that the State has a more defined outline around river corridors, for new and/or improved structures, structure maintenance etc. Ellen noted PC may reference this document in by-law and town plan updates.
- b. Ellen shared the purpose of the river corridor is to protect against flooding and erosion hazards. Increased traffic, structures, even changes in activities could be considered an improvement which may negatively affect a river corridor.
- c. Ellen also asked about whether rural residential vs conservation areas could have better criteria /definitions with the town plan/ future by-law updates.
- d. Ellen plans to go through the town plan and bylaws and provide her list of comments/ gaps in the existing bylaws - including the potential benefits for site plan review. Ellen would like definitions and more instructional specifics. Specifics & clarity would help speed up the approval process for permits and leave less gray areas.
- e. PC noted having that list would be great as after the town plan, by-law updates are on the list for the PC. Ellen noted she'd try to get it done for January.

5. Bylaw Modernization Grant Review

- a. Tabled. Peter to check with Emily to see if there are any requirements with this item before the end of the year.

6. Continue Discussion of Town Plan Update

- a. Hearing January 2nd.
- b. Emily is not in attendance, no updates at this time.
- c. Does the updated town plan have a cover photo? PC to ask a few folks in town who may have great Montgomery art for the cover.

7. Public comment

- a. None

8. Other Business/ Additions:

- a. PC Secretary Position

- i. Due to scheduling conflicts, secretary roll is going to be open starting January 22nd 2023.
 - ii. Board to post open position in hopes to fill
- b. PC Budget for 2024
 - i. Budget development discussion recap:
 - 1. \$2,000 for 10% match on By-law Grant Match
 - 2. \$1,200 Secretary budget exact number of meetings/ hours TBD. PC meetings needed for By-law updates unknown.

PC motion to adjourn 7:34PM - 3-0 all in Favor. Meeting Adjourned.