

Fair Haven Planning Commission
Town of Fair Haven - December 4, 2024 - Regular Meeting

Commissioners Present: Robert Richards - Chair, Linda Sienkiewicz, Cindy Pritchard

Commissioners Absent: Jason Coupal - Vicechair, Patrick Frazier

Others Present: Phil Adams - Zoning Administrator, Jennifer Jackson - Minute taker

Agenda

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by Chairman Richards.

2. **Review of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Approval of Minutes: Regular meeting - November 20, 2024

Mrs. Pritchard motioned to accept the minutes from the November 20th meeting as written. Ms. Sienkiewicz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

3. **New Business:**

Discuss possible proposed Fair Haven subdivision regulations and the additional items required for Fair Haven to qualify for a Downtown Designation.

Chairman Richards reviewed the previous meeting and discussion with RRPC Representative Logan Solomon. ZA Adams asked if the PC members had the opportunity to look at the subdivision bylaws shared by RRPC. Chairman Richards stated yes and that much was repetitive to Fair Haven zoning. Mrs. Pritchard asked where the subdivision bylaws would be recorded. They would become part of the Zoning Bylaws as an additional section.

Chairman Richards stated that he believed the Downtown designation might be more difficult than initially suspected. ZA Adams stated that subdivisions don't happen much in Fair Haven. That Major and Minor subdivision will be available and that Minor subdivisions do not need to go before a board. Chairman Richards stated the ½ mile acre around the center is the area for subdivision, but because of the river that area may be able to be shifted.

Chairman Richards suggested that the PC go through the 8 step application process for Downtown Designation and assign who should do what step in the process.

DownTown Designation Application Packet

(https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Application-Guidelines.pdf)

Page 6

Step 1 Cover Letter

Covers why Fair Haven is seeking Downtown Designation.

Step 2. Authorization and Notification

- Selectboard should pull minutes from meetings discussing the Application
- Town Manager takes letters and copy of notices.

Step 3. Confirmed Planning Process

Step 3. Confirmed Planning Process

- RRPC Completes

Step 4. The municipality must meet at least one of the following to demonstrate its planning commitment.

Adoption of a design control district, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4414(1)(E);

ZA Adams stated that if changes were to happen there are a set of regulations that need to be followed. The design regulations need to be clearly laid out for all to see. There needs to be a group that reviews these changes and the need to be VERY clear. Mrs. Pritchard questioned whether or not the current Zoning Bylaws say what people can and can't do. ZA Adams stated that no they do not accept signage. Chairman Richards stated we need some specifics but we don't know how specific. Mrs. Pritchard stated wouldn't the PC need to work alongside a Design Control Board? ZA Adams gave the example of the glass doors the Brew Pub wanted to put in but people didn't like the idea, the PC and zoning couldn't control that. Design Review talks about exterior changes.

Chairman Richards reminded that in this section the PC only need to choose one option.

Adoption of a local historic district, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4414(1)(F) (please note that this is not the same as a National Register district);

Mrs. Pritchard asked who would help choose the local historic district? The Historical Society?

Chairman Richards stated he didn't really want to make more regulations. Mrs. Seinkiewicz stated she would look up the statutes for the PC to look over.

24 V.S.A. § 4414(1)(E and (F) <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/24/117/04414>

Adoption of regulations that adequately regulate the physical form and scale of development that the State Board determines substantially meet the historic preservation requirements in subdivision 24 V.S.A. §4414(1)(E) and (F);

Creation of a development review board authorized to undertake local Act 250 reviews, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4420.

ZA Adams stated that a few surrounding towns have Development review boards. Chairman Richards stated he'd like to stay away from a review board. Mrs. Pritchard said that if it's a challenge to get more people to join a "new" board; why not regulate the responsibilities to the Planning Commission. Chairman Richards stated that he believes the point of this is to ensure more community involvement.

Has the community modified its zoning bylaws that demonstrate its planning commitment since the last renewal? Yes / No

Please describe how the bylaws continue to protect and enhance the historic character of the downtown and attach relevant sections of the zoning bylaws"

Step 5. Community Reinvestment Agreement

- Chairman Richards stated that this step sounds complicated but he believes it really isn't that complicated. A downtown organization is needed and will need to be created. - A

group needs to meet regularly, have a budget. The trick is what we can get and wavers the State has to help.

Step 6. Municipal Capital Budget and Program

- A capital budget and program showing a clear plan for providing public infrastructure within the downtown, including: (Chairman Richards believes this to be mostly completed.)
 - Drinking water - Mike at the water plant
 - Public space - Selectboard
 - Wastewater - Carry at the Wastewater plant
 - Lighting - already complete
 - Storm water - being worked on
 - Transportation, including public transit, parking and pedestrian amenities - being worked on
- Evidence that the plan has been formally adopted by the legislative body of the municipality and board of directors of the downtown organization.

Step 7. Downtown Organization

Chairman Richards wondered if the goals and objectives could be pulled from the town plan and the organization could just adopt them.

ZA Adams asked what area would be dealt with. Chairman Richards stated the Downtown area in his mind would be the grade school to the River, to St. Mary's maybe. Mrs. Pritchard stated she would be the devil's advocate; why not River to Shaw's? If this is for ACT 250 help, there's no land in the area suggested that is developable. Chairman Richards stated that the Downtown Designation doesn't care about large development within the designated area. It was suggested to get RRPC and Logan Solomon's help with the area that should be designated.

Mrs. Pritchard asked who will pay for all this? Chairman Richards stated the town, but they'd also have to agree to it. It implies cooperation between the town and the people living there. All we do is set the goals. The town would have to do the things that aren't private. Maybe a goal would be to create a "makerspace" in the large soon to be empty laundromat space. The Planning Commission then discussed ideas for the OPera House Space in the center of Downtown. ZA Adams noted that the Town of Vergenes took over the rent of the Downtown businesses. Businesses paid them and they enjoyed that.

Mrs. Sienkiewicz stated that the organization sounds alot like the Fair Haven EDC. Chairman Richards stated he has spoken with Mr. Traverse and he wasn't against the EDC taking on the role. Mrs. Pritchard stated that the EDC is already funded, that potentially their funding could be increased.

Page 7

Step 8. Water and Wastewater Compliance and Reserve Commitment

- 2 forms need to be filled out from the application and Chairman Richards will take care of getting them completed.

Step 9. Funding and Resources

- Chairman Richards stated that the town already has a tax stabilization, that it's conservative, but it exists. It might need to be modified for Downtown purposes, but that could be a goal.
- Chairman Richards stated that at first this step concerned him, but then he realized that they are understanding that different towns have different abilities.

Step 10. Downtown Designation Boundary Map

- RRPC can help create, but they need PC opinion on boundaries.

Step 11. Other Required Information

- Mrs. Pritchard will speak with Lorraine Brown about the Historical District boundaries if they exist.

Mr. Richards explained that the timeline is to have all this completed by June 2024, hoping for an extension. May need to lobby legislators.

Mr. Richards stated that potentially Mr. Solomon will be at the next meeting with subdivision examples.

4. Other Business:

- a. **Review of Mail:** None
- b. **Public Comment:** None

5. Adjournment:

Mrs. Pritchard made a **motion to adjourn at 8:07 pm**. ZA Adams brought to the attention of the PC that the first Wednesday in January is the 1st of the month. Mrs. Pritchard **motioned to skip the January 1st meeting unless there is an application to address**. Mrs. Sienkiewicz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mrs. Sienkiewicz seconded the adjournment motion at 8:10pm. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Jackson, Minute-taker

**** Next Regular Meeting****
December 18, 2024