

Brattleboro Planning Commission

May 2, 2016

Minutes

Planning Commission: Elizabeth McLoughlin, Chair; Kate Audlin, Kathy Urffer, Rachel Zamore, Shannon Primrose (left at 7:00 PM), James Cumming

Excused: Eric Annis

Staff: Rod Francis, Sue Fillion

A. Meeting called to Order

Ms. McLoughlin called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M.

B. Approve Minutes March 7, 2016 [Chair] (5 minutes)

Ms. Urffer moved approval as written; Ms. Primrose seconded. Pass 4-0.

C. Announcements

- Ms. McLoughlin welcomed Shannon Primrose and James Cumming to the Planning Commission
- Staff advised that they sent the letter to Green Mountain Power regarding the South Brattleboro Substation and met with their attorney and some GMP representatives to discuss the designs. There will be improvements made to the landscaping and stormwater management. A spill prevention plan and containment plan is also being developed.

D. Public Comment

No comment.

E. Brattleboro Brownfields Program

1. Status of Funds

Ms. Fillion reported that there is \$173,152 in petroleum assessment funds and \$154,472 available for hazardous sites.

2. Ratification of 14 Spring Street

Ms. Audlin moved to accept 14 Spring Street into the program for a Phase I ESA; Ms. Zamore seconded. Pass 4-0.

3. Update on sites

Ms. Fillion advised gave the following updates:

- 56 Elm Street – work is ongoing. Lead and asbestos testing will occur this week.
- Reformer Building – LE Environmental was selected for the Phase I ESA. Site inspection will occur this week. The addition cost reflects that lead, asbestos, and mold inspection will occur at this time.
- 14 Spring Street – Terracon was selected for the Phase I ESA and will begin work this week. Terracon has experience working in this part of the town and understands the hydrological conditions.
- 250 Birge Street – The Site Nomination form was received today. The Vermont River Conservancy is looking to purchase this property and would put river corridor easements on it that would restrict future development in the river corridor. This site has been targeted for floodplain restoration in several state reports. Historical uses on the property include a mill for the Estey Organ Co., and lumber storage associated with the kiln dry.

Ms. Zamore moved to accept 250 Birge Street into the program for a Phase I ESA contingent on receiving the property owner's signature; Ms. Audlin seconded. Pass 6-0.

A. EPA Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Project (SGIA) [Staff]

1. Overview of Project

Mr. Francis explained that the Town is receiving assistance from EPA Region 1 for this project. The EPA recently hired a consultant (consisting of a team of 3 firms) to work with the community to create a series of design approaches, informed by climate change, that take into account the urban form and are done in a way that can attract federal support. Part of this is in response to an Executive Order that directs federal agencies to come up with a policy about how they will fund development in the 500-year floodplain. This is a planning study, not an engineering or economic review. The process includes public outreach through a charrette.

Mr. Cumming asked what the consultants used for their climate change predictions. Mr. Francis advised that in broad terms the assumption is increased frequency of large-scale rain events, increased intensity of rain, and a decrease in snow fall.

2. Review and Comment on Concept Plan

The Commission reviewed the draft conceptual plan created by the consultant team. The Commission was impressed by the plan and appreciated that it was tailored specifically to Brattleboro. They suggested that the new residential development off of Flat Street should be cut back by one row so that it is not as close the Brook. Mr. Cumming reported that what he is reading indicates that it is highly unpredictable. Mr. Francis agreed and stated that the resilience comes from catering to really large volumes.

There was discussion over whether this plan would help reduce flood insurance costs. Mr. Francis stated that if implemented, it could trickle down to discounts on the rates.

Ms. Audlin noted that there is a need for affordable housing in the community and that might come up during public outreach. She also stated that there is a fair amount of crime in the area and this could help mitigate crime, because attracting more people to the area and creating more pedestrian activity could help reduce it.

3. Public Outreach

The Commission suggested that the following groups be included: Arts community; bike/ped community; FEET; renters in the neighborhood (not just long term but transient too).

Ms. Fillion advised that the Conservation Commission is also interested in the project and is going to do a tour of the area at their May 24, 2016 meeting which begins at 5:15 PM. She suggested Planning Commission may wish to join and will send out notice of the tour.

Ms. Urffer suggested that in communicating to people we stress that this allows people to perceive what is possibility and that

Economic viability (trying to sell houses in the area with prohibitive flood insurance costs) this shows that there are a lot of tools to protect homes, make flooding less intense, and create an asset for the neighborhood and community.

B. Adjourn

Ms. Audlin moved adjournment at 8:00 PM; seconded by Ms. Urffer. Pass 5-0.