

Brattleboro Planning Commission

July 1, 2019

Minutes

Planning Commission: Felicity Ratte, Tom Mosakowski, Kathy Urffer, Josh Steele, Kate Audlin,
Energy Committee: Oscar Heller, Carol Levin, Tom Finnel, Ralph Meima (arrive 5:25)
Public: Karen Saunders, Abby Mnookin, Michael Bosworth, Andrew Eames, Jessica Gelter (5:55)
Town Staff: Peter Elwell, Town Manager
Consultant: Brandy Saxton, PlaceSense (arrived 5:55 PM)
Staff: Susan Fillion, Planning Director

A. Meeting called to Order

Oscar Heller, Chair of the Energy Committee, called the joint meeting to order at 5:15 PM

B. Joint Meeting with Energy Committee

Oscar Heller reported on the progress of the Sustainability Coordinator. He advised that he will go before the Selectboard on July 9 with a job outline, and a general argument for the position with context about what a sustainability coordinator could do, how it will bring value to the Town, and how it is different from what is already being done. He advised that working group envisions that in the first year of the position, the person will use their use expert knowledge, experience, and research to reach out to the community. He views the position as someone on staff who is advocating for sustainability measures as a subject matter. He said that he would like the Planning Commission to add their support to the creation of the position for the 7/9 Selectboard meeting.

There was a discussion of hiring and the Selectboard's role in that. Town Manager Elwell advised that hiring would be by town management but the Selectboard is responsible for deciding whether to use the \$100,000 towards a new position or for other energy/sustainability purposes. F. Ratte noted the job outline is more general than the visions of success. She asked the working group if they were okay with that. Members of the working group were okay with that. Town Manager Elwell advised that fiscal and environmental sustainability will be a major part of their work but that there are other measures of sustainability that will be considered. It was noted that there are benchmarking systems for communities to measure themselves and the Town would likely will set up something like that. A. Mnookin would like Visions and Policies would be part of a recruitment/hiring package. She said that climate change is connected to economic and social considerations.

There was a discussion of how the position would be structured and how priorities for the position would be set. K. Audlin wondered if there would be a public process for establishing the priorities, noting that the position was supported by Representative Town Meeting. Town Manager Elwell said that priorities would be set by himself and the Planning Director. He advised that the person will participate in the Management team.

O. Heller advised that this would not be just an implementation position but rather a planning position that will include measuring and analyzing. There was discussion of different projects that a coordinator could be involved in. It was noted that there are degree programs at colleges.

F. Ratte felt that the Selectboard felt that should adopt a set of values that are inherent in the document prior to hiring so that it is easier for the person to do their job.

K. Urffer moved that the Planning Commission vote to support the hiring of a Sustainability Coordinator as defined by the public committee. J. Steele seconded. Pass 5-0.

C. Announcements

No announcements.

D. Public Comments

No public comments.

E. Approve Minutes of May 6, 2019

K. Urffer moved to approve the minutes; T. Mosakowski seconded. T. Mosakowski would like the minutes to reflect the added priority of “ Schedule a joint PC/DRB meeting to discuss Land Use regulations.” Pass 5-0.

F. Downtown Design Plan

S. Fillion introduced Brandy Saxton, the consultant for the Downtown Design Plan. B. Saxton introduced the project. She noted that there are two key public engagement activities:

- Better Block Challenge - pop-up placemaking in the public realm. This involved choosing up to 3 teams to implement their pop-up. This will be kicked off with a meeting/presentation on July 17. Potential locations for this kickoff are Brooks House lobby, Stone Church, or the old Moles Eye space.
- Design Charette - focus on Bridge Street intersection and other areas of downtown. This is a 3-day period of activities with public meetings, walk and talks, design.

There was a discussion on how to engage groups to submit for the Better Block Challenge. There was also discussion about what they would need to submit. It was agreed there will need to be criteria to judge them. B. Saxton suggested that we encourage collaborations that stretch through stakeholder groups. She advised that the larger consultant team will provide technical support to community volunteers.

The Commission discussed the contact list in the Public Engagement Strategy. Additional groups that were suggested including: Rotary, businesses, Chamber, Windham Windsor Housing Trust, Brattleboro Housing Partnership, Historical Society, Stone Church, Brattleboro Coalition of Active Transportation, Library. It was agreed that social media, iBrattleboro, Front Porch Forum should be used.

B. Saxton said that there will be a project website set up.

There was a discussion of the expectations for the Planning Commissioners to attend these events. It was requested that a signup sheet be created to ensure that there is participation but to spread out the commitment.

B. Saxton work with on the publicity materials for the July 17 meeting. It was suggested that the term “creative placemaking” not be used because surveys have found that people do not know what that means. She will distribute by the end of the week for feedback. The Planning Commission discussed the criteria for Better Block Challenge. It was agreed that it should be short with questions such as 1) what is your idea? 2) Overview of project? 3) desired outcomes 4) preferred location.

The schedule was discussed. August 14 will be a Planning Commission meeting to choose the Better Block Challenge pop-ups. It was agreed that the proposal submission should be midnight on August 12. B. Saxton and S. Fillion will come up with a rubric of how to judge the proposals. It will be circulated to the Commission for feedback.

There was a discussion of other outreach/survey methods that may be used.

G. Certified Local Government

The Planning Commission discussed the recent Certified Local Government presentation. S. Fillion asked if they wanted to pursue some sort of vote to recommend to the Selectboard that the Town pursue CLG designation. The benefits were discussed. There was a discussion about regulation, but K. Urffer made it clear that CLG designation is not tied to regulations.

K. Audlin made a motion that the PC pursue the Certified Local Government. T. Mosakowski seconded. Pass 5-0.

H. Adjourn

K. Audlin moved adjournment at 8:15 PM. Seconded JSteele.