

ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

May 12, 2011

7:30 p.m.

Essex Town Hall Meeting - Room A

REGULAR MEETING

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Seating of Members:

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Chair Tom Danyliw. Present were Chair Tom Danyliw, Vice Chair Linda Herman, Alan Kerr, Claire Tiernan was seated for Ralph Monaco, and Bob Laundry was seated for Carla Feroni. Planner John Guskowski attended via phone conference.

2. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the April 28, 2011 meeting were reviewed. There was one correction to the minutes. Alan Kerr made the motion to adjourn. The minutes will be corrected to reflect that.

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Bob Laundry and **seconded** by Claire Tiernan. **Motion carried unanimously.**

3. New Business

a. Receipt of Application – Vumbaco Subdivision, Toby Hill Road

Submission of the Vumbaco application will not occur until the June meeting.

4. Old Business

a. Safe Routes to School

After last month's Public Information Session, DOT is formally reviewing the design plan to respond to input from that session. The major change will be in the new sidewalk portion. The south end will be shortened, and the north side will be changed as well. The DOT review will probably take a month or so.

b. EPA Sustainable Communities Project – Update

John Guskowski reported that June 1st and 2nd are the days of the Sustainability Workshops. The EPA consultant, Chris Duerkson, is an attorney and land use specialist from Clarion Associates, out of Florida. There will be a kickoff meeting to go through key issues. He has discussed different approaches with John Guskowski, and has received all current materials. The focus will be on a small set of development areas: targeting economic growth and quality development, protection of natural resources, and availability and variety of housing in the context of small towns. A conference call will narrow down the calendar of events and key positions and stakeholders to be involved. Tom Danyliw wants the Planning Commission involved and asked John to look for an evening so that can happen. The hope is for a day and a half of workshop sessions so a time is available for everyone. The Planning Commission should have significant quality time with him. Claire Tiernan and Bob Laundry are available during day. The Planning Commission will be notified as soon as the schedule is set.

b. Historic Preservation

John Guskowski reported that copies of the Toolbox have been distributed and it is posted on the Town website. The final version of the Historic Property Survey is awaiting input from the State, the Historical Society, and ADR Subcommittee. Tom Danyliw reported from the ADRS meeting that they are working on the focus groups. There was considerable discussion on how to narrow the direction. Tom Danyliw sees the next step as educating the focus groups on options from most to least restrictive, and to get a sense of what people want. The Public Meeting will take place in Sept. The sense from this will be put together with focus group information and then decisions will be made on the top options. There was debate as to whether the Subcommittee should be directive or reactive. Tom Danyliw is looking for responsiveness. John Guskowski met with Neil Nichols, Jane Piro and Janice Atkeson.

John Guskowski reported on the Survey and Planning Grant

The Toolbox is in “final” form, incorporating all comments, but then a call was received from Mary Donahue who had corrections, so there will be another version. The Survey is also waiting for comments from the Historical Society, and will then be given to Phil Esser. Linda Herman asked about the list of 100 properties. The Toolbox doesn’t identify specific properties. The list is on the CD. The DVD went to ADR Subcommittee and some members of Historic Society. John Guskowski posted the Transportation Study on his office share site and will do that with this file. There are maps of properties covered in the survey. They are grouped starting with Main Street in each village, the core, and work out.

c. Transportation Study

Final copies should be available for the next meeting. The Planning Commission will review the document and then invite Jean Davies from CRERPA to talk about the plan for regionalization, which includes this Transportation Study.

d. Subdivision Fees Ordinance

There is no response from Attorney Royston regarding his review of the Fees Ordinance and no date from the Selectmen to review the proposal. John Guskowski will prepare a memo to Attorney Royston requesting a response.

e. Affordable Housing

This issue is also on hold. The Zoning Commission is working on Plains Rd. rezoning. When that is finalized, then Affordable Housing will move up on their agenda. It has touched on this within the proposed regulation changes.

5. Reports of Committees and Officers

a. Inland Wetlands

Claire Tiernan reported. The primary focus was a property belonging to Michael Picard that was issued a cease and desist order. A decision was made after scrutiny of his landscaping plan to allow him to proceed, but activities done will be done with scrutiny and conditions.

b. CRERPA

Alan Kerr reported that only one representative from CRERPA, Linda Krause, attended the meeting. Her discussion was on regionalization, but never the impact on surrounding towns. She mentioned that Jean Davies is working on a list of engineering firms so towns don't have a potential conflict of interest. John Guskowski offered that regionalization is a big issue. Regional transportation study, Margot Burns is putting together a cooperative land trust for the lower valley, looking at cottontail habitats, bat issues, regional recycling, hazardous materials, and that group would be a good source for these regional initiatives. Regionalization will impact how that board operates. Tom Danyliw asked Alan Kerr to think about how to make meetings and interactions with CRERPA more productive in what they offer to this town, and work through John Guskowski or the Planning Commission to make this happen.

c. Economic Development Commission

Bob Laundry reported that parking continues to be issue, (also mentioned was the Exit 3 area,) and a 2-hour parking ordinance on the books that has never been enforced. A letter is going to the Selectmen about this. Enforcement is an issue, but so is parking for residents. The loss of retail is part of the discussion. More realtors and office spaces are moving in on Main St.

Transportation Planners said it was not an issue. Peak times need to be looked at. John Guszowski noted that it is a management issue. The Transportation Study determined that it's not a supply issue but a need for better signage and management. It's an issue for EDC so they need to validate and show the "peaks". EDC is looking to institute the trolley and satellite parking. Tom Danyliw suggested raising it to an agenda item as soon as the Transportation Study is received. The Transportation Plan has to do with the nature of the town, what the village will look like and how we want it to look. Linda Herman stated that the Transportation Study is a recommendation but there are other drivers, so how will it be "settled"? Tom Danyliw feels the Planning Commission needs to address it with dispatch, support EDC, and see it through. What are potential ways to abate the concern? Alan Kerr understands that business owners feel they have an opinion. Claire Tiernan sees that it must be difficult for business owners to see dwindling retail, and asked what the premise is for this parking opinion? Tom Danyliw responded that it is beholden to the Planning Commission to look at it in a measured way. This is the meaning of "settling". The Study has recommendations. Linda Herman feels rents are too high, and the town has been stuck on this for years, so it needs to be addressed and dealt with i.e., signage. If the parking issue is resolved, then everyone can move on to the next issue, which is "downtown". The big problem is lack of retail development, but if the focus is on parking, lack of signage and enforcement of parking, i.e. owners parking in front of buildings, then what are the "peak" times? Bob Laundry was asked to identify the problem and provide objective data to support it. The Transportation Study will define and give recommendations but does not have to be adopted. It needs to be worked through with EDC. Loss of retail seems to be a more central issue. The Planning Commission will continue to raise the issue under EDC's report not as a separate agenda item.

d. Architectural Design Review Subcommittee

This was covered under previous discussion.

e. Chairman's Report – no report

f. Planner's Report

John Guszowski covered his reported under previously discussed items. He directed attention to the bill for the Cook Subdivision from Attorney Royston. The time to file the mylars has passed so the application will have to come back to Planning.

The Town budget was voted down. It will go back to Education and the Selectmen for review.

g. Correspondence & Invoices

Motion by Linda Herman and **seconded** by Bob Laundry to pay the invoice from Attorney Royston. **Motion carried.**

Motion by Claire Tiernan and **seconded** by Linda Herman to adjourn at 8:35 p.m.
Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Meinsen
Recording Secretary