

January 9, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Members present: Jo Jackson, Katie Manaras, Chris Boyle, Ken Pohlman, Sarah Laird.

Public present: Jamey Fidel (VNRC), Eileen Landon, Fred Danforth, Judi Danforth, John Migne.

Present on zoom: Mary Yates, Tim McGowan, Marilyn Ganahal, Mike Rainville, Nicole Lee, Rob Reiber, Sarah Taylor, Serena Fox; James Dumont; Lisa Nading (sp?).

Jo Jackson calls to meeting order at 6:35pm

Amend/Approve Agenda

- Katie moves to amend agenda; Chris seconds. No discussion.
 - o Motion passes 5-0.

Public Comment

- None.

Approval of 12/5/24 minutes

- Jo moves to approve 12/5/24 minutes; Sarah seconds; no discussion.
 - o Motion passes 4-0 (Katie not voting because wasn't present).

Planning Commission submission for report for Town Meeting

- Chris will draft Planning Commission's submission for Town report for Town Meeting.

Forest Block discuss w/Jamey Fidel from VNRC

- Challenges to forest: Development, climate change, health issues; outright forest land conversion
- VNRC has website that tracks parcelization of forests in VT
- Data reflects forest land is being converted to residential
 - o Forest not necessarily gone; 'residential' just means house is now on parcel (such that forest could still be on parcel as well)
- Data reflects that **subdivisions are intersecting with forest blocks**
 - o Most land subdivision is taking place in rural residential districts
 - o **Need to focus on these districts if pursuing conservation of forest blocks**
- Town plans are increasingly including wildlife habitat, wildlife travel corridors, connectivity areas, forest/wildlife inventory, and map data (e.g., forest block map)

- **Act 171 requires Town Plan to identify forest blocks, wildlife connectivity**
 - o Jamey recommends town plan map these areas; plan around these areas; think about strategies that can be used to regulate these areas to achieve goals.
 - o Agency of Natural Resources has **Act 171 guide useful to planning commissions**
- Clustered subdivision/PUD can be used to avoid fragmentation
- Conditional use standards can include criteria related to wildlife, forest fragmentation, etc.
- **Act 181 (recent Act 250 reform)**
 - o Added forest criterion to Act 250 review
 - o Reinstate road rule

Jamey's recommendations:

1. Implement Act 171 planning;
2. Develop strategies (regulatory vs. non-regulatory) to protect forest blocks;
3. Consider adding development review standards to address natural resources impacts and fragmentation of forest blocks/connectivity areas;
4. Add forest blocks, connectivity areas, and significant wildlife habitat to **Sec. 2.10 in subdivision regulations;**
5. Add definitions for resources added (e.g., wildlife habitat, connectivity, etc.).

Discussion w/Jamey

- Approach to incorporating forest blocks in Town Plan: Identify forest blocks that matter to community, determine what community wants to do with them; identify strategies (regulatory vs. non-regulatory) for achieving those goals.
 - o **Shared driveways vs. spaghetti driveways for subdivision**
- Act 171 compliance can be achieved simply by including list of non-regulatory strategies (e.g., "Landowners interested in conserving land are encouraged to work with land trust.") in Town Plan
- Option to then go to next step by implementing **specific standards** related to forest blocks

- **Forrest connectivity overlay** is a possibility
- Minimum lot size can be used as a way to direct development
- Waitsfield undertook forest value mapping project; still available online
- Fred Danforth notes economic considerations in Lincoln are unique; motivation to identify valuable forests in Mad River Valley were driven by distinct factors
- John asks about long-term trends that should be considered:
 - o Long term viability of forest vs. need for housing;
 - o Forest owners are aging demographic; large forest parcels often have older owners/will change hands;
 - o Pressures on forest economy.
- Judi Danforth encourages Planning Commission to take advantage of Hill Country Holiday as means of communicating with Town.

New Business

- Katie suggests getting plan together for public engagement at Hill Country Holiday.
- Nicole Lee supports idea of having map that people can use to indicate areas that are important to them in Lincoln and why.
- Katie will take lead on figuring out color(s) for sticky notes to use on map, etc.

Old Business

None.

Adjourn

Jo moves to adjourn meeting at 8:38pm; Ken seconds; no discussion.

- 5-0 in favor; motion passes.