



# *City of Barre, Vermont*

## *“Granite Center of the World”*

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### **Planning Commission Meeting Minutes September 27, 2018 at 6:30 P.M. Council Chambers, City Hall (6 N Main St)**

A regular meeting of the Barre City Planning Commission was called to order by Commission Vice-Chair Michael Hellein at 6:30 pm at City Hall. In attendance were Commissioners Jim Hart, Dave Sichel and Ken Lunde. Absent was Chair Jackie Calder. Also in attendance were Planning Director Janet Shatney; Permit Administrator Heather Grandfield. Visitors included Debra Gable, Bill LaPrade, Craig Gable and Brian Bailey, all representing various properties in the city. Vice-Chair Hellein determined that there was a quorum for the evening.

**Adjustments to the Agenda:** None.

**Visitors and Communications for anything not on the agenda:** None.

#### **Old Business:**

1. Gable property on Merchant Street: 194 Merchant Street, owned by Wanda Gable and Frank Baily, c/o Craig Gable. Under the current zoning ordinance, there are only specific uses allowed in the Planned Residential Zoning District, of which retail is not allowed. Vice-Chair Hellein gave an explanation of Adaptive Reuse, the opportunity that the property owners have under the draft zoning ordinance that may allow them to do more with that property, and specifically the empty building. B. Bailey asked why retail isn't allowed in the draft as one of the specific uses, and the response was that traffic, noise, etc. are factors for a neighborhood setting. While Merchant Street is used by a huge amount of traffic coming in to and going out of the City, it is largely a residential neighborhood surrounding the specific property. Discussion of taxes, livelihood, uses, history of the buildings, time in the family, and specifically retail were then discussed, with Commissioner Sichel pointing out that the review criteria are what will allow or not allow, and then how to look at it. It was decided to have the Consultant come up with draft language allowing retail up to 2500 sq. ft. of retail space.
2. Gable property on S. Main Street: 92 S. Main Street, owned by Debra Gable. Ms. Gable is concerned that the value of the building would be reduced because new buildings and parking won't allow for what might be there. Her concern is that they won't be able to sell the existing building. Question asked was would it be harder to build on under the new regulations. Vice-Chair Hellein said the Planning Commission is in no way standing in front of development, and that the draft ordinance is not at all intended on that. Commissioner Sichel posed that having any hypothetical type of business and running it through the draft would give them a good sense of ideas.
3. Motion to approve the August 23, 2018 meeting minutes was made by Commissioner Hart and seconded by Commissioner Sichel, unanimously carried.

4. Planning Director Shatney explained that the Energy element of the municipal plan was updated through a grant with the CVRPC (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission) this past spring. A staff member there updated the entire section to pass review for conformity. The Energy Committee would like to take the draft section, turn it into a full energy plan for the City, and was looking for endorsement by the Planning Commission to allow them to work more fully on it. Motion made by Commissioner Sichel and seconded by Commissioner Hart. Motion carried with Commissioner Lunde abstaining.
5. A review of October meetings shows that 2 members will be absent for the October 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. It was decided that we should not forgo one meeting as we are close to wrapping up the zoning draft. It was decided that we will meet on October 18<sup>th</sup> as a special meeting, in addition to the regularly scheduled meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> will occur.
6. A review of the draft ordinance comments were as follows:
  - Foundations as related to swimming pools, no change;
  - To address the question of what is a principal entrance, a definition was added;
  - Allowing residential uses in the UC-1 district with distance requirements – further discussion needed;
  - The suggestion of making multi-family dwellings a conditional use to lower the rental stock in the City is against Fair Housing Standards, therefore, no change;
  - B&B's and Inns definition was reviewed, as they are an accessory use of a single family dwelling, so there is no change made to the districts which we allow them in;
  - Religious institutions are governed by state and federal law limiting municipalities to regulate them, and only under site plan review, therefore no change was made;
  - Rehabilitation Services/Residential Treatment Facility was removed from the last residential zoning district as requested, as essential services like these would need city services better served by being closer to the downtown districts;
  - The Director is continuing to find pictures in Barre City that will fit in the overlay examples;
  - In the overlay district language, the word “areas” was replaced with “districts”;
  - Recessed doorways in overlay language were discussed, and that we have several currently in the city, and a recessed doorway provides for weather protection and is a common commercial element, no change was made;
  - Questions regarding what a historic structure means in the overlay section were affirmed that based on the definition for a historic structure, wherever reference is made to such, it means a structure that is listed either individually or as a contributing structure on the National or Vermont Register of Historic Places;
  - A definition of a public park was added based on questions posed;
  - A request to not allow 150 sq. ft. efficiency units if not owner occupied was made, and again, based on Fair Housing Law, we can't have different rules for owners versus renters, so no change was made;
  - Any time a multi-unit dwelling is proposed in the City, it must go to the DRB for at least site plan review, so no change was made to this wording;
  - A request to make rehabilitation services a minimum of 1,500 feet from certain uses, versus the current language of 1,000 feet was reviewed; a map with circles of a radius of 1,000 feet will be drawn and reviewed at the next meeting for this request;
  - A concern was raised about “tiny homes”, those that are much smaller in size than current, and a width concern was raised, as well as design elements. This is important to understand as all dwellings, not RV's, must meet both state and local (the city has adopted the International Building Code as its review mechanism) building code, and will be treated as any other single

family dwelling. The minimum size possible under the state building code is 150 sq. ft., so no change was made to the current draft text;

- Technical or Legal review costs were requested to be removed; and it was left in as this is a tool that could be used if necessary, recognizing that it's usually not needed;
- The design review overlay size was discussed, and it was made understood that we at the minimum need the downtown area so that the City will qualify for the ability to apply for a whole host of grants. The expansion of the overlay is desired so that some preservation of our housing stock will remain;
- Grandfield asked about small porches and wheelchair ramps in the overlay district not having to go through DRB approval as they seem too time consuming and cost prohibitive. Shatney will check with consultant on language existing, as the Commission agrees that those structures, especially existing residential, should not have to wait and go through the DRB review for time and cost prohibitiveness of constructing a necessary wheelchair ramp;
- Lastly, discussion regarding 2201.G in the overlay district "*Exterior Modifications and Additions to Existing Buildings*" still appears to be confusing as written; the Commissioners asked that the words "*where applicable*" be more prevalent in the sentence, perhaps at the beginning of the sentence. The Consultant will be asked to reword this sentence.

**New Business:** None.

**Executive Session:** Not needed.

**Roundtable:** Grandfield gave update on upcoming DRB hearing October 4<sup>th</sup> and applicant and intent.

**Adjourn:** A motion to adjourn at 8:13 pm was made by Commissioner Lunde and seconded by Commissioner Sichel, motion carried. There is no audio recording of this meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Janet Shatney, Planning Director