

1 **REGULAR BARRE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**
2 **Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 6:30 pm**
3 **Remote Participation via ZOOM Platform**
4

5 The regular meeting of the Barre City Planning Commission was called to order virtually by the
6 Vice-Chair David Sichel at 6:30 pm. In attendance participating via the Zoom Video Conferencing
7 platform were Commissioners Rachel Rudi, Michael Hellein, Jackie Calder, Thom Lauzon, and
8 Amanda Gustin. Visitors included Carol Dawes, Barre City Clerk/Treasurer; Bill Ahearn, Public
9 Works Director; Jake Hemmerick, Barre City Ward 1 Councilor; Steven Mackenzie, Barre City
10 Manager; Janet Shatney, Planning Director, and members of the public.

11 **Adjustments to the Agenda:** Commissioner Calder requested adding the Berlin Mall New Town
12 Center’s letter of support that went to the Council, and was added after reviewing the February
13 meeting minutes.

14 **Public Comment (for something that is not on the agenda):** there was no request by any of the
15 public in attendance to speak or address the Commission.

16 **Old Business Approve meeting minutes of February 11, 2021:** A motion was made by
17 Commissioner Lauzon and seconded by Commissioner Calder to approve the February meeting
18 minutes as presented, with no discussion, motion carried unanimously.

19 **Town of Berlin’s New Town Center and Barre City letter of support:** Director Shatney
20 explained that the letter was presented to the city council under the Consent agenda, a motion was
21 made to support, but failed for a lack of a second with no further discussion. Commissioner Hellein
22 noted that the Downtown Board would be hearing Berlin’s application on March 22, 2021. He
23 also volunteered that he could explain why he voted no to sending the letter, but the Commission
24 moved on.

25 **New Business: Tax Increment Financing – Carol Dawes, City Clerk/Treasurer; Steve**
26 **Mackenzie, City Manager:** Clerk Dawes went through what TIF (Tax Increment Financing) is,
27 what it means and how increment works. A TIF District is an economic development tool,
28 controlled by the VEPC (Vermont Economic Progress Council) which is part of the Agency of
29 Commerce and Community Development.

30 A TIF district is a defined by an area within a municipality where public infrastructure projects are
31 undertaken in support of private development initiatives. The debt service for the private and for
32 the public infrastructure projects is covered by property tax increment increases that are generated
33 by the growth in the grand list from the private development, as an example say somebody bought.

34 Questions were asked about the nature and frequency of the audit, what kinds of information we
35 expect to receive from the audit, what was the original TIF amount, what is left and what is the
36 increment.

37

38 In the TIF plan itself, there are two projects remaining. One is completion of the rest of the
39 Merchants Row parking lot from Depot Square to project Prospect St and the other is the
40 construction of a parking garage over on the Pearl Street parking lot. Councilor Hemmerick
41 inquired about the master plan, and if it was a flexible design, which Manager Mackenzie answered
42 it was.

43 **New Business: Paper and Accepted/Unaccepted Streets – Bill Ahearn, Public Works**
44 **Director:** Director Ahearn began by explaining that a paper street grew from drawing streets and
45 lots on paper with little regard to the actual lay of the land. People brought forward ideas on how
46 the lots would be developed, then identify where the streets were supposed to go, then identify the
47 lot and the lot dimensions and then create a plat of their subdivision with the city. Those lots
48 would then begin to sell, and typically the roads and utilities that completed their land would be
49 developed, and that all occurred in the City between 1910 and 1935. Streets are laid out on ledge
50 outcroppings, and we have instances where houses are in the middle of city right-of-ways. There
51 are 210 lots in existence on those paper streets that are undeveloped. There's over 16,000 feet of
52 paper streets in the city, and basically the city has an interest in them. People who front on them
53 have an interest in them, and people have lots that are accessible through that agreed upon right
54 away.

55 Commissioner Sichel noted when he worked in Ohio, an instance occurred where a building permit
56 for a house would not be issued until the street was put in to the municipal standards, and the hope
57 is that the City follows this good management practice as well. Discussion occurred about street
58 widths, right-of-way widths, emergency services, vehicle access, a cost sharing process for the
59 installation of utilities, and standards for certain lengths of those utilities.

60 Accepted and unaccepted streets are different in that an accepted street is that which the city owns,
61 has utilities under and maintains. An unaccepted street is one that may be owned by someone else,
62 or that the owner can no longer be found. Questions circled around maintenance and paving an
63 unaccepted street, and Mr. Ahearn stated that in a particular instance, the city paved a section of
64 unaccepted street on three (3) occasions, and maintain it continuously.

65 Commissioner Gustin suggested that by raising these questions made tonight would be a good
66 framing footwork for the next conversation, and perhaps Mr. Ahearn and Director Shatney could
67 come up with a list of things that the Planning Commission could delve into, as it would be most
68 helpful to the process forward.

69 **Review Next Steps Summary Table for upcoming meeting items:** Discussion began with
70 suggestions for better ways to get the information out regarding meetings and their topics.
71 Commissioner Calder suggested that an informative narrative be on Front Porch Forum and the
72 newspaper, in addition to the agenda that gets published. It was agreed to save the Work Table for
73 another meeting, and take a deeper dive into paper streets.

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75 **Staff Updates:** In addition to what was included in the packet, Commissioner Gustin asked why
76 were old permits paper being deteriorated, and Director Shatney explained where the Planning,
77 Permitting and Assessing storage locations are, in the old area of the Police Department.

78

79 **Roundtable:** Commissioner Gustin mentioned that she attended the book discussion group at the
80 Aldrich Library on walkable cities, and found it was extremely interesting and so they're going to
81 be going forward quarterly with books on building community.

82 **Adjourn:** A motion was made by Commissioner Lauzon and seconded by Commissioner Rudi to
83 adjourn at 8:14 pm. *motion carried unanimously.*

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85 There is an audio and video recording of the meeting available. The meeting was recorded by the
86 video conference platform.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Janet E. Shatney, Planning Director

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