

Barre City Planning Commission

January 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Present: David Sichel (Chair), Jackie Calder (Vice Chair), Michael Hellein (Secretary), Amanda Gustin, Thomas Lauzon

Absent: None

Staff: Janet Shatney (Director of Planning, Permitting & Assessing)

Visitors: Becky Wigg

1. Call to Order

5:30pm

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

Sichel added discussion of future meeting format as New Business item C.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Old business

A. Approve meeting minutes of December 9, 2021

A. Change language to read "Shatney said an application would be denied because the section on window signs does not contain the word door."

B. Remove incomplete sentence "There was some discussion, leading to Shatney"

Motion to approve minutes as modified: Lauzon, second Calder, unanimous vote to approve.

B. Zoning regulations - Signage discussion and action

Hellein stated that he was concerned about the removal of the Figure 3-8 sign table, as it contains the definition of what a temporary sign is. He said communication about existing ordinance is a bigger problem than

the ordinance's content. Lauzon said that it's hard to see a solution to communication that doesn't put more work onto overworked staff.

Gustin and Sichel both recommended not having permitting necessary for temporary signs. Calder suggested putting a definition of temporary signs in the opening of the Temporary Signs section.

Shatney reminded the commission that any decisions tonight are just the beginning of the public hearing process to make changes to the ordinance.

Sichel summed up the consensus of the commission: permits will not be required for temporary signs, and the definition of a temporary sign, present for 180 or fewer days, will be present in the paragraph at 3107.H. Calder asked if the signs section would be going alone through the hearing process, or wait for housing, and Sichel said yes it would move forward alone.

Sichel suggested that we remove the dimensional requirements on the window signage area. Hellein said it would make sense to remove the dimensional requirements if we kept the coverage limit at 20%. Lauzon made a case that 40% would be better for businesses and would still leave most of the window open. Gustin pointed out that clear backgrounds would preserve visibility into storefronts. Hellein came around to Lauzon's coverage recommendation since the ordinance currently includes language ensuring a clear background.

There was discussion about the definition of a clear background. Lauzon suggested removing the clear background language, and Hellein resisted that change.

Motion: Lauzon moved changing coverage limit to 40%, striking B, C, D (Height above ground), and removing the first Miscellaneous items (vinyl letters and clear background), and adding an item under Miscellaneous reading "Window signs must be placed to maintain visibility into storefronts", Sichel second. In favor: Calder, Sichel; opposed: Hellein, Gustin; motion failed. (At the time of meeting, it was presumed the motion passed due to the majority present being in favor, but a majority of all seven seats is necessary to carry.)

Motion: Gustin moved to accept Shatney's changes to the Temporary Signs ordinance, and the definition of a temporary sign, (present for

180 or fewer days, will be present in the paragraph at 3107.H.) and start the hearing process, Calder second. Carried unanimously.

C. Housing Task Force update

Sichel provided an update on the activities of the Housing Task Force, noting that it will be discussed in the future.

D. Keys to Barre – Housing Task Force Plan

The packet includes a plan created by a sub-group of the City Council that will help guide the city's activity in increasing the supply of local housing.

5. New Business

A. CVRPC February 24, 2022 – Municipal Plan Check-in meeting

Representatives from the CVRPC will attend the next Planning Commission meeting. Shatney mentioned that trainings are available from the CVRPC.

B. Next Focus discussion

Sichel noticed that it seems like housing is the next topic for us to focus on. He noted that there are some things that will take a long time, and some things that can happen more quickly. Some short-run items are unit density limits in zoning districts and current parking requirements.

Gustin brought up having a paper streets plan as a long term goal. Hellein mentioned addressing zoning district boundaries considering the context of land use in adjacent municipalities. Sichel noted that there are areas where lot sizes don't conform with the zoning which presents a barrier to development. Lauzon stated that a lot of projects are in the works and development by renovation can make costs about half of new construction. Lauzon asked that the commission address density before parking, with consensus.

Gustin praised the Housing Task Force Plan. Sichel noted that a consultant, and a potentially a grant, may be needed to make a number of the changes to the ordinance. ARPA funding may be available as well.

C. Meeting format discussion

Motion: Gustin moved that starting 2/24 the Planning Commission use Zoom only for meetings, second Lauzon. Carried unanimously

6. Staff Updates

Shatney provided a written update report in the packet.

Shatney noted that the city's application for a Municipal Planning Grant for pedestrian planning was not granted.

Lauzon asked if there was a Plan D for filling the Assessor position. Shatney answered that it's difficult to find someone who knows how to value a property. There are no responses to the current round of positions. Montpelier is also searching for an Assessor and not having success. Shatney and the City Manager are looking into working with Barre Town to share some expertise.

7. Roundtable

Sichel introduced Becky Wigg who may be interested in appointment to the commission. She wondered if regional job training programs could help fill the unfilled positions. Sichel suggested Montpelier and Barre could together afford a more lucrative salary than each alone.

8. Adjourn

7:13pm, **Motion Lauzon, Second Gustin, unanimous vote to adjourn.**