

Craftsbury Planning Commission January 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Farley Brown, Tim Patterson, Gordy Waterhouse, Ross Davis, Linda Ramsdell, Rudy Chase. Guests: Gina Campoli and Katherine Sims

Farley called the meeting to order at 7:18 pm. The Commission postponed approval of November 8, 2018 minutes, because Tim can't find them on his computer.

Next, the Commission reviewed the 2016 Craftsbury Town Plan Action Steps (see below). The Flood Resilience Action Steps are a priority this year. Linda voiced a desire to focus on affordable housing sooner rather than later. The Commission agreed.

Farley shared that the Land Use Task Force no longer exists, and so Land Use Action Steps that were assigned to the Land Use Task Force will be split between other groups, including the Planning Commission. This is also true for action item #2 in the Agriculture section.

The Commission reviewed other Action Steps in each section, identifying items that have been completed, items that are not immediate priorities, items that are being done by other groups, and items that need to be addressed by the Planning Commission.

Gordy noted that it would be helpful to have follow-up and assessment for items as they are addressed.

Next, the Commission welcomed Gina Campoli and Katherine Sims to discuss the Better Connections Program grant application and Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative grant application.

Katherine started by going over the context for pursuing grant funding for recreational opportunities to help drive economic development, an opportunity rooted in the community visit process of three years ago.

Gina said that trails can lead to jobs, thus economic development through recreation opportunities. What can the town do to promote biking, horseback riding, walking, etc, including planning and developing new trails in coordination with private landowners. Signs, connections to existing trails, kiosks, parking, and a branding and marketing effort would be part of the program. Gordy asked if the grant has been funded. Gina said no, they've applied, but they won't hear back until March. Demonstrating the potential economic impact is important.

Ross asked clarifying questions about where trails would be located and whose property they would be on. Gina said that the focus is on existing trails, and the scope of work is on linking trails and reaching out to landowners. Katherine said that the Better Connections grant is more focused on the planning process of figuring out how to best lay the groundwork for trail development. Rudy asked about snowmobiles, and shared a story about concerns in the

snowmobiling community about trail access, and the perspective that snowmobiles should not be left out of the picture. Trails should be open to many uses, Rudy continued, and Craftsbury has a great opportunity to be a leader in the state about multiple uses. Katherine and Gina agreed, and shared a story about the director of VAST joining the conversation about trail use, with snowmobiling as part of the intended use for the trails. Tim asked a clarifying question about trail use, and Gina noted that a central thrust of the grant is to increase year-round trail access, since winter trail networks are not always accessible at other times of year.

The Better Connections grant, as noted above, is bigger picture, more about village center master plans and economic study, including how to secure funding for infrastructure improvements that will be necessary to sustain the success of economic development that results from recreation opportunities. Rudy noted that the approach needs to be equitable and inclusive, and help everyone. It's important not to charge for trail use, he said, and find an approach that works for private landowners and a broad range of residents. There may be a perception, he noted, that this initiative is designed to help the Outdoor Center. Gina and Katherine emphasized that the opposite is really true - it's designed to help the rest of the community tap into the economic vitality of the Outdoor Center, and outdoor recreational opportunities more broadly, and the approach will include lots of local engagement with landowners and other stakeholders. There is a steering committee for this process, and the Commission nominated Rudy to serve on this steering committee, noting his family's long record of opening their land to many uses. Gordy asked what the Planning Commission can do to help. Gina said that the Planning Commission needs to support the grant application. There is a 10% town match required, which is on the docket for Town Meeting via a Good Neighbors fund appropriation.

Katherine noted that the Better Connections grant would help address Action Items in the Town Plan. Gordy clarified that the grant is for planning, not actual infrastructure. Gordy expressed support for planning that results in more signage, for road safety. Farley suggested that the Planning Commission vote to support the Better Connections grant, pending agreement from absent members (Dave Rowell, Annie Rowell, and Emily Maclure) who will be contacted by phone.

Gordy asked if the grants would help with existing roadways and trails in town. Gina said yes - the trail grant will look at connecting village areas for year-round travel, and the Better Connections grant will focus on village center master planning and an economic study. Gordy noted that addressing overuse of roads, like the Post Road, that get lots of traffic because of GPS but that aren't designed for that much traffic, will be an important part of the planning process - especially roads that lead to the Outdoor Center.

A third grant, via Northern Border Regional Commission, could logically follow the Better Connections grant.

Tim moved to lend the Planning Commission's support to the Better Connections grant application pending support of absent members, who will be followed up with by telephone, with

a final decision by January 21st. Vote passed with a quorum. Gordy noted that it is important for absent members to be consulted, and that his “aye” is contingent upon the approval of other members.

Other Business -

- Whetstone Wellness is pursuing an Act 250 permit for renovations. This is just an update, and will be followed up with at a future meeting.
- Tim updated the Commission about the Craftsbury water system’s new policy for adding users to the system.
- Gordy voiced concerns about Pete’s Greens building in the floodplain. There’s no notification to the Town, or to Gordy (floodplain administrator) when buildings go in. Farley explained that Pete’s has special status as an agricultural operation, so permitting goes through a different process. **Farley will try to get clarification about jurisdiction for projects like Pete’s.** Rudy said that transparency is important, to avoid situations where people try to figure out what’s going on when one farm seems to be held to a higher standard than another, and perceive a double standard. It’s important to respect common resources, Rudy noted, especially when it comes to waterways.

At 8:45 pm the Commission adjourned.

2016 Craftsbury Town Plan Action Steps

Land Use Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Use the Land Use Task Force to support the Planning Commission and Conservation Commission to move action items forward. (LAND USE TASK FORCE NO LONGER EXISTS)
2. Continue to redirect investment into the villages by maintaining village center designation. Reach out to owners of income-producing properties to make sure they are aware of potential tax credits for fit-up and improvements. (Planning Commission)
3. Consider the creation of a local working lands network composed of individuals with a stake in local agriculture or forestry. The group could identify their current and future challenges – such as access to capital and land – and regularly report to the planning commission. (Land Use Task Force)
4. Investigate open space planning, possibly including a land evaluation and site assessment to develop a consensus-based vision for future conservation efforts, taking

into consideration the long-range implications on taxes. (Planning Commission, Conservation Commission)

5. Develop brochures for the town that are available in the Town Hall to help people understand the development desires and requirements. Examples could include information on tax credits for income-producing properties in the village centers, low-impact development standards, the 2007 Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules, the State Shorelands Regulations, and flood hazard regulations. (Planning Commission) (COMPLETED)

Culture Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Study the possibility of a performance space within the community. (Craftsbury Chamber Players, Planning Commission)
2. Study the continuous availability of daycare facilities. (Planning Commission, Schools)
3. Identify public spaces that are currently not handicap accessible and provide regulatory information pertaining to accessibility. (Town government and private sector)
4. Encourage discussion around important issues via film screenings, discussion groups, and any other gatherings. (Outdoor Center, Art House, Sterling College)
5. Identify and pursue grants that could further cultural endeavors and improve accessibility. (E.g. Vermont Arts Council, USDA Community Facilities, Preservation Trust) (Schools, Town Government, Nonprofits)
6. Continue the development of the town Web site as a consistent and reliable source of information. (All Town Committees and Commissions)
7. Develop an inventory of skills sets in the Community. (Community and School Task Force)

Economy Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. •Form a Craftsbury Business Association to accomplish the following:
 - a. Promote job creation.
 - b. Develop a reliable method for measuring the recirculation of dollars spent on local goods and services.
 - c. Identify unmet industry/service gaps in town.
 - d. Identify local markets for local goods.
2. Research Internet and cell options for our community. (Cell and Broadband Access Task Force)

Agriculture Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Provide the Land Use Task Force with the necessary education, tools, inventory on planning tools to support agricultural land use, (e.g. "Sustaining Agriculture, the new training modules developed by Farm to Plate). (Planning Commission)
2. Consider the creation of a local working lands network composed of individuals with a stake in local agriculture or forestry. The group could identify their current and future challenges – such as access to capital and land – and regularly report to the Planning Commission. (Land Use Task Force)
3. Reach out to community beyond Land Use Task force to understand and incorporate public opinion on land use and history of land use in Craftsbury.
4. Provide information about voluntary/incentive-based land use programs like the Current Use Program. (Planning Commission)
5. Support accurate mapping of agricultural resources and activities (e.g. Current Use enrollment, conservation). (Planning Commission)
6. Make resources about supporting agricultural businesses broadly available - see Appendix A for list of resources. (Planning Commission)
7. Ensure proper training and outreach regarding development in flood hazard areas, including forms of development exempt from local regulation, such as required agricultural practices. (Planning Commission)

Historic Craftsbury Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Explore the possibility of preparing a comprehensive history of the Town of Craftsbury, including oral histories. (Historical Society)
2. Explore the possibility of publishing a booklet illustrating the historic structures that have been preserved to date. (Historical Society)
3. Update the information contained in the Register of Historic Places and encourage their maintenance and preservation. (Historical Society)
4. Continue to digitize historical documents and photos, and find a venue for making them widely available. (Sterling College, Historical Society)
5. Explore various financial incentives including rehabilitation of historic buildings and seeking preservation grants. (Planning Commission, Historical Society)

6. Identify programs that can help make historic buildings ADA accessible (e.g. Preservation Trust, Village Center Designation Program, Department of Historic Preservation, USDA Community Facilities Program. (Planning Commission, Historical Society))

Natural Heritage Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Collaborate with Sterling College, Craftsbury Academy, Craftsbury Outdoor Center, town committees, government institutions, agencies, and organizations regarding education and conservation activities. (Planning Commission/Conservation Commission)
2. Develop and utilize maps on land use patterns to understand current agricultural areas, contiguous forestland, and residential/commercial development impacts on natural heritage. (Planning Commission/Conservation Commission)
3. Investigate open space planning, possibly including a land evaluation and site assessment to develop a consensus-based vision for future conservation efforts, and address the long-range implications on taxes. (Planning Commission, Conservation Commission)
4. Maintain the natural heritage database located at Sterling College. (Conservation Commission/Sterling College)
5. Identify and map natural communities and critical wildlife features, including deeryards, bear production areas, vernal pools, and wildlife corridors. (Conservation Commission)
6. Identify and map species of greatest conservation concern such as bats, bees, butterflies, and their habitats. (Conservation Commission)

Utilities and Facilities Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Disseminate the Craftsbury Groundwater Mapping project to better inform the residents who use well or spring water supplies about the quality and condition of the water sources. (Sterling College, Planning Commission)
2. Update telecommunication ordinance. (Planning Commission)
3. Determine needs for Town Clerk's Office and future of current building. (Selectboard, Planning Commission)
4. Explore establishing a town collection site for reusable household items. (Selectboard, Planning Commission)
5. Encourage establishing a food composting center in town or in collaboration with nearby facilities. (Selectboard, Planning Commission)
6. Pursue Village Center designation for East Craftsbury. (Planning Commission)

7. Ensure that Local Emergency Operations Plan information is current. (Selectboard)
8. Consider a wastewater planning grant from the Agency of Natural Resources (Planning Commission)
9. Investigate the long-term viability of an emergency food access site in Craftsbury. (Planning Commission, the Faith Community, Hardwick Area Food Pantry)

Energy Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Publicize successful examples of efficiency, weatherization, and renewable energy production to promote change. (Energy Committee, Planning Commission)
2. Collect data on current energy usage in Town Buildings. (Energy Committee)
3. Complete energy audits of Town Building and carry out the recommendations. (Energy Committee, Selectboard)
4. Collect data on energy use after implementation of audit recommendations. (Energy Committee)
5. Publicize the results of energy savings from the Town audit, weatherization, and energy savings. (Energy Committee, Planning Commission)
6. Publicize the results of weatherization and energy efficiency changes in the school buildings. (Energy Committee, Planning Commission)
7. Publicize success stories from Town residents that have installed renewable systems. (Energy Committee, Planning Commission)
8. Continue the Town funding of a bulk purchase of LED light bulbs to sell to Craftsbury residents. (Energy Committee, Selectboard)
9. Continue public education and publicize success stories on weatherization, heating systems and renewable energy projects. (Energy Committee, Planning Commission)
10. Provide on-going education and identification of professional resources (See Appendix A, Internet Resources on Energy for Craftsbury Residents. (Energy Committee, Planning Commission)
11. Establish town policies that encourage good practices, e.g. not taxing renewables or energy efficiency home improvements.

12. Develop more complete baseline data on energy usage including electricity, heating energy, and fuel for road operations in order to identify ways to make additional improvements such as more generation of power, conservation, building improvements, and operational practices.
13. Promote pedestrian friendly, bike friendly systems to encourage less motor vehicle driving.
14. Reduce vehicle idling in private and public spaces.
- 15.

Education Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Study the continuous availability of daycare facilities. (Planning Commission, Schools)
2. Continue dialog with Craftsbury Academy and Sterling College regarding the needed repairs of the Industrial Arts building. Explore the viability of funding sources and tax credits for this project. (School board, Sterling College, Selectboard)
3. Support the Schools and the Community Task Force in their work to further connect the school to the community.
4. Develop an inventory of skill sets in the Community. (Schools and Community Task Force)

Housing Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Explore the availability of affordable housing options in Craftsbury, including the rental availability of single family homes. (Planning Commission)
2. Encourage residents on creative approaches to sharing housing resources, addressing the persistent challenge of affordability. (Planning Commission)
3. Encourage the maintenance of houses of historic significance using incentive based strategies, such as grants, tax credits, etc. (Planning Commission, Historical Society?)
4. Utilize social media and the Town Web site to publicize rental opportunities. (Web site Committee)
5. Develop an emergency housing resource call list and flyers that are available at key public spaces. (Planning Commission, Vermont 211, Faith Community)

Transportation

Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Parking along the road between the Academy Building and the Industrial Arts Building should continue to be discouraged during school hours. (School principal, with support of the School Board)
2. Consideration should be given to establishing a commuter parking area to encourage car-pooling. (Planning Commission/Energy Committee)
3. The Town should pursue options for the development of better bicycle- pedestrian lanes along the developed areas of Craftsbury (Selectboard)
4. "Share the Road" signage should be erected in order to raise awareness as roads are improved or repaired. (Selectboard)
5. A sidewalk system should continue to be investigated. (Selectboard)
6. Bikeways, walkways and scenic vistas, should such be identified through public hearings and open discussion. (Planning Commission, Land Use Task Force, Selectboard)
7. Investigate key speeding areas and strategies for slowing down traffic, such as radar speed signs.(Selectboard)
8. Ensure adequate signage for wayfinding and public safety, e.g. "Share the Road" signs on the top and bottom of the Village Hill. (Selectboard)

Recreation Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Use existing maps (e.g. Craftsbury Outdoor Center) as the basis for plans to create additional recreational trails. (Recreation Committee)
2. Publicize the events that are currently planned by the Recreation Committee through many marketing platforms, from posters to social media and shared town calendars. (Recreation Committee)
3. Continue to support the effort to update the Elementary School playground and other outdoor spaces. (Recreation Committee)

Flood Resilience Action Steps and Responsible Parties

1. Continue to identify and map Craftsbury's natural flood protection assets, including floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forested areas. (Planning Commission, Conservation Commission)
2. Revisit Craftsbury's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. Consider adopting regulations that will protect erosion-prone and floodwater storage areas from additional development and encroachment. (Planning Commission)

3. Maintain and regularly update the Local Emergency Operations Plan. (Selectboard)
4. Continue to meet the VTrans Road and Bridge standards. Participate in regional road foreman trainings and Transportation Advisory Committee meetings to stay abreast of flood resilience measures for the Town's roads and bridges. (Selectboard/Road Commissioner)
5. Attempt to achieve yearly updating of the Town's transportation infrastructure information in the Vermont Online Bridge and Culvert Inventory Tool. (Road Commissioner)
6. Identify and replace undersized and failing culverts. . (Selectboard/Road Commissioner)
7. Ensure proper training and outreach regarding development in flood hazard areas, including
forms of development exempt from local regulation, such as required agricultural practices.(Planning Commission)