

Town of Benson

PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Submitted to Town Clerk on 5/7/2023

Minutes from Planning Commission meeting held on May 3, 2023

Meeting was called to order by Cheryl Murray at 5:36 pm.

Motion to approve the agenda by Steve, second Ted. Discussion re: want to add new business, the sewer capacity question on South Stage Rd per email question from Housing Trust of Rutland County, Dave Caputo. Also Cheryl wanted to add re: Small Highway Improvement Grant that we may want to bring before the Select Board. Motion to approve agenda with additions by Ted, second by Steve. Motion carried.

Motion made by Ted to approve the minutes of 3/22/23, Steve second. Motion carries.

Motion made by Ted to approve meeting minutes of 3/29/23 when there was no quorum present. It was noted that meeting minutes were written and Cheryl and Ted both agree on their content, but because there was no quorum at that meeting, the motion was not seconded.

Brad Barrett was approved by the select board to sit on the planning commission. Discussion re: still one more seat to fill. Looking for a volunteer.

Cheryl spoke about the Downtown Village Center Renewal and noted that it was approved by Montpelier.

ARPA Funds – it looks like remaining (available) ARPA funds are just under \$200,000. The select board requested that the planning commission bring any recommendations they may have to a board meeting. The intent we'd like to focus on is: Maintain vital public services, even amid declines in revenue resulting from the crisis; and; Build a strong, resilient, and equitable recovery by making investments that support long-term growth and opportunity.

Town Plan will need to be updated within the next two years. Ed Peltier has spoken about the need for updating some zoning rules as they haven't been done since 2018. Cheryl said she will try to touch base with Tom Bartholomew, as he helped to make both original documents and has offered guidance should we need it.

Sewer Capacity discussion: Brad will talk to plant operator to get a better handle on the sewage capacity due to our conversation (and also in his role as selectman), he would like a better understanding of it also. We talked about the lower school population, about perhaps building out the current Benson Heights to possibly add more housing there. Dan Caputo said the need is great in Rutland County for subsidized housing, but that they can't generally get funding for anything less than 4 units. Will put on a future agenda.

Cheryl showed Brad an email from Ethan Pepin (RRPC Transportation Planner) that she received through her work on the Rutland County Transportation Advisory Committee. It was the announcement of the first round of the Highway Safety Improvement Grant Program, which pays for small scale projects to improve roadway safety. It's targeted towards rural towns and is a 100% state funded grant with NO LOCAL MATCH. Proposed projects must be between \$5,000 and \$35,000. Treatments include: signage, lane striping, intersection pavement marking, removal of objects such as brush to enhance sightlines, and signpost upgrades; all of which Brad said we have needs for. Discussion followed and Brad agreed to work on some ideas for grant proposal items, Cheryl said the planning commission would help get the ball rolling on writing the grant and we agreed to notify the TAC/RRPC of our intent to apply.

For the past decade or so, Benson has not participated in many grant-funded opportunities, both in terms of highway applications and facilities, etc. We spoke about the need to take advantage of some of these, and that RRPC is offering their help and encouraging us to participate in future grant rounds.

Next meeting date will be June 7th at 5:30 p.m.

Brad made a motion to adjourn at 6:20 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Steve Murray, Clerk, Town of Benson Planning Commission.

DRAFT