

The Town of St. Albans
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Town Hall, 579 Lake Road
June 14th, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes

Present: S. Smith (Chair), G. Henderson (Clerk), A. Voegele, B. Deso

Staff Present: Becky Perron, Zoning Administrator, AJ Johnson

Public Present:

CALL TO ORDER

S. Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

SIDEWALK MASTER PLAN UPDATE PRESENTATION-DUBOIS & KING

John Steele of Dubois & King appeared before the Planning Commission for the Sidewalk Master Plan “kick-off meeting”.

J. Steele announced to the Planning Commission that he had previously spent a day in St. Albans Town familiarizing himself with the area. While assessing the area he kept the prior 2003 Sidewalk Master Plan in mind. S. Smith advised that the Town Plan had been redone since the 2003 Sidewalk Master Plan and therefore, rather than consider this an “updated plan”, he preferred to think of it as an entirely new plan with the previous plan as a guide. J. Steele added that many components of the previous plans were still relevant and hoped some of the 2003 plan could be salvaged.

J. Steele presented the Planning Commission with an agenda of discussion topics including sidewalk priorities, ACT 250 and the 9L Criterion, and funding sidewalk projects. J. Steele agreed that a huge sidewalk priority was connecting Town School to the Collins Perely Sports Complex. He added that the previous “system” for determining the priority of proposed sidewalks was perhaps too complex. He hoped the Planning Commission was open to adding ideas of their own as well as eliminating proposed sidewalks that were no longer relevant. J. Steele assured the PC that his company was familiar with criterion 9L and ACT 250 and agreed those would both play a major role in developing sidewalks. J. Steele agreed there was a critical need to efficiently create a new plan as the recently updated Unified Development Bylaws referred to a Sidewalk Policy that does not exist.

S. Smith pointed out that maintenance plans would affect where sidewalks were placed, such as in developments. There would be additional costs outside of building the sidewalks. B. Deso wondered if a maintenance or reconstruction plan would also be necessary along with the Sidewalk Plan. The PC had a brief discussion of collaborating with the City of St. Albans for sidewalk maintenance. S. Smith talked about the importance of understanding Criterion 9L and the stipulations involved. S. Smith stated that the PC had opted to mandate sidewalks in the Growth Centers so in the future if sidewalks are put in residential areas they will have a place to connect to. S. Smith pointed out the problematic idea that sidewalks are needed for growth, growth is needed for more revenue, and more revenue is needed to build and maintain sidewalks. The PC debated placing sidewalk on one side versus the other or placing sidewalks on both sides of the road. The PC discussed the best residential areas to place sidewalks. B. Deso advised that any money spent on sidewalks would need to be put up for a vote. “The public isn’t ready for million dollar sidewalk projects,” S. Smith agreed.

The PC had a brief discussion about building sidewalks out all at once versus building “x” feet per year. B. Deso advised the PC to think of future resident complaints due to the development of sidewalks. He gave several examples of how sidewalks will affect the flow of traffic and encouraged the PC to think of ways to solve potential problems before they become complaints. J. Steele noted that the PC seemed to have an area of focus in the growth centers and suggested also considering mandating sidewalks in large developments. S. Smith feels sidewalks in developments are for “private enjoyment”. J. Steele stated that schools are becoming less and less occupied and building sidewalks in developments encourages parents with students to buy within that neighborhood. S. Smith suggested using incentives to encourage sidewalk infrastructure within developments. S. Smith asked the PC to keep future demand in mind as certain areas of the Town begin to grow.

J. Steele asked the PC at what point in the process should the public be invited to join the conversation. The PC agreed that the public meetings should be held once the PC agreed on a plan and the PC was ready to “sell the plan”, so to speak. Zoning Administrator, B. Perron, suggested the Planning

Commission orchestrate a public survey to see what the public is interested in and what their opinion and suggestions of sidewalks are. B. Deso reiterated his concern of traffic being slowed down or stopped due to sidewalks and wondered if a traffic study would be beneficial. The PC had a brief discussion of funding sidewalks, such as the Local Options Tax. S. Smith suggested making a “phase one” plan and getting the public behind the proposed sidewalks and pushing the Selectboard to generate funding ideas. A. Voegele stated that the Sidewalk study only had a budget of \$15,000 and the PC needed to focus on one specific area such as the Northern Growth Center. G. Henderson wondered if J. Steele had a recommendation on most urgent sidewalks. J. Steele recommended incorporating the Growth Centers in the plan.

The PC discussed phasing projects by starting with a three season sidewalk. Winter maintenance would not be a concern and costs could be cut. Stone could be laid but not paved over and people could still utilize a place to walk without the high prices. A. Voegele wondered if the proposed sidewalks should be 5’, 6’ or 8’. The PC discussed the ADA standard of 5’. B. Perron asked if the study would include proposed sidewalk standards. J. Steele stated sidewalk standards would be discussed.

J. Steele recommended presenting some sort of plan to the public in August or September. The PC discussed proposed timelines. The PC proposed to meet again in a month to further their discussion with J. Steele. The PC agreed that one project should be selected to “fast track” and get the public excited about sidewalks. The PC thanked J. Steele for his time. The PC agreed to table to Bylaw Revision and Town Plan discussions.

OTHER BUSINESS

MINUTES

MOTION: G. Henderson made a motion to sign the minutes of the meeting dated May 10th, 2016. A. Voegele seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: G. Henderson made a motion to sign the minutes of the meeting dated May 24th, 2016. A. Voegele seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00p.m. G. Henderson seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
AJ Johnson, Administrative Assistant

Sam Smith, Chair

Date

Grant Henderson, Clerk

Date

Al Voegele

Date

Brendan Deso

Date