

DRAFT

NEWPORT CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES APRIL 16th, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Woodman Page (WP) Chair Robert Currier (RC) Colleen Moore De Ortiz (CMO)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Secretary Ruth Sproull (RS), open seat

OTHERS PRESENT: Pam Ladds, Ann Page, Julie Raboin, Council Member, ZA Charles Elliot, John Monette, Mike Welch, NCIC

CALL TO ORDER

7:02 p.m. Chair Robert Currier officially called the Planning Commission meeting to order.

APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 19TH, 2019 MEETING

Minutes of April 2nd, 2019 were reviewed. WP made motion to approve. CMO seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Unanimous approval.

REQUEST TO SIGN GRANT APPLICATION

Mike Welch from NCIC attended the meeting to request that the Planning Commission approve the City to move forward with the Electrical Vehicle Supply Equipment Grant Program. According to Mr Welch and the written request presented, the grant will pay for 90% of the cost and installation of an electrical vehicle charging station. The Level 2 model recommended is a fee for service model. Chair Bob Currier inquired as to the cost for the person utilizing the service. Mr Welch responded that the cost for the service is approximately \$1/hour, which is commensurate with other municipalities' practices. The charging station would have the capacity to charge credit and debit cards. However, this revenue stream does not cover the whole cost of the program, and the cost to the city would be between 300 and 500 dollars per year. There is a required 10% match for the grant, and according to Mr. Welch, this will easily be covered by the in-kind services of installation of the actual station by the Public Works Department.

Included in the written materials presented for consideration is a letter from Public Works Director Tom Bernier supporting the project and recommending the municipal lot in front of the Post Office as the ideal location. This would allow visitors charging their cars to walk about and enjoy the downtown and the lake. Mr Welch points out that Newport's proximity to the Canadian border and the more robust Canadian electric vehicle market makes this an ideal choice for the city moving forward. Vice Chair Woody Page notes that state goals and objectives are also seeking to diminish Vermont's carbon footprint. The RCT bus shelter will not be impacted by the charging station. He asks about way finding and signage for the charging station and is given assurance that wayfinding signs will be included in the project. Mr. Welch notes also that the grant application was unanimously approved by city council the night before.

WP makes a motion that the Planning Commission shall approve the City to move forward the Electrical Vehicle Supply Equipment Grant Program and authorize the City Manager to sign applicable documents.

CMO seconds the motion.

All voted in favor. Unanimous approval.

The resolution is signed by Chair Bob Carrier and provided to Mike Welch.

INTERVIEW CANDIDATES FOR PLANNING COMMISSION

The first candidate to be interviewed is John Monette. Mr. Monette has seven years of experience serving on the Derby Planning Commission, and served as chair for three of those years. He states he would like to see Newport continue to move forward, as opposed to others he hears from who would like to see Newport stay the same. The removal of the Spates block has been a very good thing for the city. He expresses a desire to support the small businesses and entrepreneurs who are already located in downtown Newport, as opposed to spending a lot of resources to attract new manufacturing enterprises to this area. He readily states that he will need to bring himself up to speed on current planning literature and Vermont statute as it pertains to the planning process. Even though the mayor is his brother, Mr. Monette feels confident and mindful that he can avoid conflicts of interest serving in this capacity. The council will meet on Monday May 6th to take the Planning Commission's recommendations under consideration and appoint a new member.

The Planning Commission waited until just prior to adjournment to make the decision, in the hopes of providing extra time for the second candidate to arrive. The second candidate was not able to make it to the meeting.

CMO made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend John Monette to the City Council for appointment to the Planning Commission. WP seconded the motion.

All voted in favor. Unanimous approval.

The planning commission will recommend Mr. Monette to the city council for appointment.

CITY PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Charles Elliot, zoning administrator begins by relating advice from NVDA about making the plan future oriented and avoid making mentioning or building the plan around specific developments or projects. For example, referring to the Hole on and its development opportunities is not advisable. He states that the last iteration of the plan was divided up amongst members to work on. He also points out that many community partners can be asked to support the process. An example would be the ReNewport Committees, which are populating the Renaissance Corporation committees. The ZA notes it is very helpful to get community partners to do as much as possible.

Colleen Moore de Ortiz (CMO) points out that according to the Vermont Planning Manual (<https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/DHCD-Planning-Manual-Module1.pdf>), the first step is to accomplish a community assessment to guide the creation of a shared vision for Newport's future. Without a shared vision it can be challenging to write a plan describing the future. Is the shared vision an outdoor recreation and tourism economy?

Member of the public Pam Ladds states that this focus on one specific aspect is a short-sighted, high risk strategy. She points out that this strategy is not inclusive of the actual residents of the city. Colleen agrees and notes that there are other challenges facing our community, including the opiate crisis and poverty. Downtown Newport sports a child poverty rate that is over 40%. Pam Ladds also notes that people need to live in connected communities where they feel safe and a sense of belonging. CMO would like to know what the plan is for public engagement. Mr. Elliot indicates that the intention is to use the information from various studies the city has contracted since RUDAT to inform the public engagement piece.

The Planning Manual is clear that robust public engagement should be embedded in the process and dedicates quite a chunk to strategies for public outreach. CMO suggests community meetings, such as the Third Street Hood Chat

or Community Meals at local churches, as good potential opportunities to garner community feedback. CMO would like to know what the budget for Planning Commission is. The answer is zero. CMO notes that Newport has received planning grant monies in the past and perhaps could investigate whether any of these funds are currently available from the state to fund the planning process. The ZA states he is not aware of such funds, and this has been an unfunded process in the past.

CMO remains very concerned that the Commission should invest time and energy in a community assessment shared vision. She will bring materials to support creating a vision statement to the next meeting. Additionally, it would be helpful to understand all the grants and other initiatives that the city is pursuing in order to inform the plan and a shared vision for the city. Julie Raboin notes that there is such a summary document of all current initiatives located on the city website with the City Council minutes, (<https://www.newportvermont.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/04-15-19-Council-Agenda-with-Attachments-1.pdf>).

Several sections and appendices were divided up among the planning commission members present. WP volunteered to look at Appendix A; Population and Employment, Appendix C: Canada, and Appendix D: Lake Memphremagog. RC will look at Appendix E: Neighboring Communities. CMO will work on Appendix F: Schools. The zoning administrator volunteers to take on Appendix V: Flood Plain Resilience. The transportation section is discussed briefly in reference to potential visions of the future for rail passenger service to be revived. Member of the public Julie Raboin notes that at a Future of Transportation in Vermont Public Meeting, transportation officials had indicated that the likelihood of Newport seeing a revival of rail passenger service is nil. Ms. Raboin also suggests a joint meeting of the city Council and Planning Commission to discuss a shared vision to inform the town plan. Chair RC states that when member Ruth Sproull has returned, and when John Monette is appointed, this discussion can continue in a more robust way, with a full commission.

The current city plan will expire in March of 2020 and must be updated prior to that time. The current plan was adopted by City Council on March 2nd, 2015. For the legislative process to accommodate this timeline, public hearings will need to begin in December of 2019.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business is identified at this time.

DRAFT

SET DATE AND AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: May 7th, 2019 7:00 pm

Agenda:

1. Call to Order
2. Approve the minutes of April 16th, 2019 Meeting
3. City Plan
4. Other Business
5. Set Date and Agenda for Next Meeting
6. Adjourn

ADJOURN

8:31 pm: CMO made the motion to adjourn the meeting. WP seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Unanimous approval.

Minutes taken and transcribed by Colleen Moore de Ortiz

Approved _____ Date _____