

Town of Londonderry, Vermont

**Planning Commission Working Group Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 17, 2020 – 4:00 (Zoom Meeting)
Meeting held remotely via online video with no physical presence**

Commission Members Attending: Sharon Crossman, Elsie Smith, Larry Gubb, Dwight Johnson, Dick Dale, Mimi Lines and Andrew Rackear

Others Attending: Zoning Administrator Shane O’Keefe, Development Review Board member Esther Fishman, Bob Wells, Barbara Wells, Martha Dale, Lisa Sicotte, Catherine Smith, George Mora, Bruce Frauman, Bobby Gray, Gail Mann, Judith Platt, Geoff Hatheway, Kevin Beattie, Cindy Gubb, Susan Collins, Nicole Wengard

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:04 by Sharon Crossman who read the required statement mandated by the State in the conduct of a Zoom Meeting. She announced that she would be facilitating the meeting. She reviewed the Agenda for the meeting sent by all participants.
2. No Minutes were approved.
3. There was no public comment.
4. Cindy Gubb reviewed the memo a subcommittee of the PC created for the June 8th PC meeting which narrowed the thirteen points addressed by the June 1, 2020 first working session meeting. She proposed three areas for discussion: Improve community communications; build a campaign to support local business; create and launch a fun community-focused event. Mimi and Elsie elaborated on the thinking that had been done by the Planning Commission to gather data, possible action plans in the short term, and possible additional action steps that the working group might consider with respect to the three areas identified for focus. Nicole Wengard, the new Executive Director of Neighborhood Connections, invited all to consider the effort by Neighborhood Connections to focus on a regional approach to the very same issues being researched and discussed by them. It was agreed that multiple platforms were important to improve communication, but that there needed to be linkage and cooperation in the collection and dissemination of all of the considerable amount of activity and publicity within the town. A suggestion that the Selectboard create Town Communication Officer, skilled at communication and marketing, might be a useful addition. Much of the current networks depend on the internet, which may not reach every constituency from non-Facebook people, visitors, and nonresident home owners or renters. It was agreed that there is a need to create a more welcoming communications plan and a need to offer a repository for storage of information and a methodology for people to gain access when they actually feel a need to access the information previously posted or advertised, but not significant to them at the time. "Heart and Soul" a program for bringing the community together sponsored and created by the Orton Foundation is a two-year program which cost a fair amount of money might be useful. With respect to supporting businesses, temporary Zoning relaxation concerning parking, outdoor dining, or even the heights of buildings might be useful, but creating a town identity and more welcoming and attractive town center is far more important. Geoff Hatheway suggested that sidewalks are a proven visible mark that suggests to visitors that town welcomes people and wants to do business. The garden club could be enlisted to create more welcoming signs and landscaping as people enter the town. Finally, buildings need to be repaired and painted to encourage visitors to stop instead of just passing through. Weston, Woodstock, Chester, Jamaica were cited as being more business and visitor friendly. The last issue of creating a town friendly event like closing Thompsonburg road on a Sunday afternoon to allow people to stroll, play games, amble about seemed to resonate with the group. Sharon concluded the meeting by asking for additional commentary to be sent to her and asking people to adopt one or more of the many suggested actions.
5. The meeting was adjourned at 5:14.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dick Dale

The next Planning Commission Special Workshop Meeting will be July 13, 2020 via Zoom