Planning Commission Minutes

4/13/22

The meeting began at 6:35PM

In attendance: Vance Bell, Dawn Bower, Chris Cummings, Bull Dunkel, Tom Johnson, Kate Wright.

The minutes of the Feb. 9th meeting were unanimously adopted. Motion by Chris; seconded by Tom.

The committee devoted nearly an hour to discussing proposed changes to Sec.503 (Timber Harvesting) of our Zoning Regulations. Bill presented a rough draft of some new language for Sec. 503. Point one of the redraft would require landowners to get an access permit from the Road Foreman before beginning any logging operation. Chris suggested that this apply to any logging operation, not only commercial logging. Bill asked whether a landowner who wanted to cut firewood for personal use would need a permit. Chris said he/she would not because they would not be transporting logs over town roads. After further discussion the committee agreed that an access permit must be obtained for any logging that would involve the use of a town road.

A second proposed requirement would be that loggers and heavy equipment operators must get an overweight permit from the Town Clerk. Chris questioned whether we need to define “heavy equipment”. Tom suggested that we check to make sure that this regulation would not be contrary to any town highway ordinances. Dawn and several others questioned whether a $500 bond is sufficient. Chris asked who will enforce both of these regulations. Dawn noted that in the past the Fire Marshall was charged with enforcing logging regulations, but this was rarely, if ever, done. The committee suggested that a lawyer be consulted to make sure the proposed regulations would give the town the legal authority to enforce them. Bill noted that the County Forester had mentioned to him that the state legislature passed a law several years ago governing the right to log in Vermont. We must be sure our proposed regulations would not contradict that law. Chris noted that even after the roads were posted this spring heavily loaded logging trucks continued to use West Windham Road. What was that allowed? Bill said he will ask Kord and Richard about that. Bill also agreed to redraft our proposed changes to Sec. 503 and add questions that the committee feels must be answered. He will share the redraft with members of the PC and with Kord Scott (Head of the Select Board), Imme Maurath (a town auditor) and Richard Pare (Road Foreman). The commissioners agreed that once new logging regulations are adopted we must reach out proactively to local loggers and truckers so that they are aware of any changes before next winter.

Bill mentioned that he had attended a webinar recently that looked especially at how town plans and zoning regulations protect forest blocks and habitat connectors. He suggested that at a future PC meeting we take another look at how our Town Plan and Zoning Regulations address this issue.

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, May 11, at 6:30 PM.

Motion to Adjourn by Dawn; seconded by Kate.