

I. Call to Order

Members Present: Mike O'Brien, Chair; Abby Bleything, Vice-Chair; Joe Perron; Brendan Sage; Conner Daley

City Staff Present: Eric Vorwald

Guests Present: Kristine Lott, Mayor; Suzanne Blain; Michael Arnold

Call to Order by: Mike O'Brien

Meeting Start Time: 6:35 PM

Minutes Recorded by: Eric Vorwald

II. Changes to the Agenda

None

III. Public Comment

Suzanne Blain provided comments related to accessory dwelling units and detached cottages, including the review process by the Development Review Board. She identified specific concerns related to the process that she encountered as a property owner in the City. She asked the Planning Commission to consider amendments that would include more detail on the criteria used to evaluate conditional uses. Michael Arnold provided comments in the chat option related to the discussion on the proposed amendments and indicated he would not be able to stay for the meeting. His specific comments were:

I'm concerned that the proposed changes for design review to preserve historic properties were designed to slow down or halt housing development on most of Winooski's gateway districts, the only areas where significant development has materialized in the past few years. With rental vacancy rates in Chittenden Co at all-time lows, I strongly oppose new obstacles to housing production. There is value in preserving historic structures, and Winooski has many examples of wildly successful adaptive reuse projects, from our historic mills to the Winooski Block building. But that value isn't infinite, and we should not introduce unquantified regulatory costs which will be paid by renters and home buyers, while existing Winooski land owners enjoy rising property values inflated by the housing shortage. We're in a severe housing shortage, and I'd ask you to consider prioritizing housing reforms that will increase production.

IV. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Approve the July 14th minutes as presented.

Decision: 4 – 0

Motion by: Joe

Second: Abby

Approve the July 28th minutes as presented.

Decision: 4 – 0

Motion by: Brendan

Second: Connor

V. Election of Officers

Decision: 4 – 0

Motion by: Joe

Second: Brendan

Mike provided an overview of the positions available for the Planning Commission including Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. It was noted that there has not been a secretary for the past year. There was a brief discussion on the roles of each position, including the taking of minutes for the secretary. Following this discussion, Joe made a motion that was seconded by Brendan to elect Mike as the Chair and Abby as the Vice Chair. All were in favor.

VI. Continue Discussion of Amendments to Article IV – General Use Regulations

Eric provided an overview of the previous review indicating that the Planning Commission had discussed language in Sections 4.1 through 4.4. He began the discussion with an overview of the rest of the sections and noted that the goal was to review Sections 4.5 through 4.11. The Planning Commission reviewed proposed amendments and offered suggested changes and updates to the draft language.

Following this review, Eric provided information to the Planning Commission related to Section 4.4 and conversations with the State of Vermont's Division for Historic Preservation. He indicated that the Division advised on removing references to the State and National Register of Historic Places and suggested that local regulations be developed, including a local register. He engaged the Planning Commission in a discussion about how to proceed and if there should be consideration for more general regulations or requirements for demolition of any building versus just historic buildings. The Planning Commission generally supported this idea and Eric indicated that he would begin preparing language to support this change.

VII. City Updates

Mayor Lott provided information on the most recent City Council meeting including adoption of the amendments for Priority Housing, the traffic calming manual, and that the commissions would hold a joint meeting of chairs and liaisons to discuss work plans. She also indicated that the City had received a grant to replace the Winooski River bridge between Winooski and Burlington.

VIII. Other Business

Eric indicated that the next meeting of the Planning Commission would be on September 8th. At that meeting the Commission would discuss going back to two meetings per month, returning to in-person meetings, and other items.

IX. Adjourn

Motion by: Abby

Second: Joe

Meeting End Time: 8:22 PM