

Meeting Minutes
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
VIA REMOTE CONNECTION
5:30 PM MONDAY MAY 17, 2021

Approved June 21, 2021

Board Members Present: Denise Smith, Chair; Stan Bradeen, Vice-Chair; Michael Gawne; Amy Paradis; Zachar Nuse.

Board Members Absent: Luke Richter

Staff Members Present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning Development; Wendy-Ayn Coy, Minute Taker

Public Present – – Brandy Saxton and Max Villanueva, PlaceSense

- 1. Open Meeting – Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.**
 - **Introduction of Attendees** – Brandy Saxton and Max Villanueva, PlaceSense
 - **Public Comment on issues not on the agenda** – None
 - **Discuss additions or deletions to the agenda** – None

- 2. Approval of Minutes –**
 - **April 19, 2021 minutes** – Member Gawne made a motion to table the minutes until next month. Vice-Chair Bradeen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- 3. Residential Data Tool project discussion** – Ms. Saxton kicked off the Residential Spatial Analysis project. She reviewed the project description and the Planning Commission’s expectations. She displayed the study area of the residential areas. She informed the Commission of her timeline. The GIS Tool should be completed by the end of June. The block analysis would be completed by the end of August and the Zoning Recommendations would be done by the end of October.

She informed the Commission as to what makes up a block that is studied in the Block Analysis. Some of the data was removed as it is outlying data that will change the analysis. The analysis is done at the block level not the parcel level due to the variability that exists at the parcel level. She shared the starting statistics. The average residential density by block ranges from 1 to 36 dwelling units per acre. The blocks do not cross zoning district boundaries.

Vice-Chair Bradeen is looking for the ability to respond to the resident’s concerns as the Commission is looking at changing the different zones. Montpelier used this for a base line discussion when they started their project. Perception of what the numbers mean vs. what they actually mean is often very different and having an example of density and lot size helps people. Population density used to be higher than they were perceived. Owner occupied rentals vs. condos will have some challenge getting really accurate lot coverage information on a parcel basis but when aggregated to a block level there is a sense of what is typical that can be used for analysis.

Trying to use inside current GIS software. The tool will be run from the database to be able to start the analysis. The tool itself was discussed and how it will analyze the data and how the data can be broken down, exported, and analyzed. Vice-Chair Bradeen asked how easy it would be to add a field. It should be simple if it is kept in connection with a parcel number.

Mr. Sawyer is interested in the “heat maps” (colors get deeper as numbers get higher) of the city’s density. Ms. Saxton pointed out that non-conforming parcels can be a trigger that indicates that a change needs to be made in the zoning. It shows that what is built on the ground does not match the zoning that is in place. Many municipalities want the zoning to match what is on the ground today.

Vice-Chair Bradeen asked about Ms. Saxton’s opinion on the State’s approach to zoning. Most municipalities do not have the regulations in place that make it a nice pill to swallow. The State does not seem to be addressing many of the aspects of housing quality. Few communities have the codes in place to address housing quality. The State’s approach means that the municipalities are losing the ability to limit higher density housing. There are not that many places that you can live in Vermont if you are not an able-bodied person who can drive and do snow removal. There needs to be a discussion on how to fund infrastructure and services.

Member Gawne asked about how the math worked for the South side of Rugg Street. Groups homes are counting as one in the database. They are single family homes with a larger population base. Mr. Sawyer asked that if any of the Planning Commission member has a property that the information needs updating to send it to him.

Member Nuse stated that the Commission was interested in how the age of the homes coincides with the zoning. How the age on housing stock effects the availability of housing. Member Nuse asked if a web map was in the scope of this project. It is not. There might be a possibility of the ability in the future.

4. Review regulatory Proposals –

- **Updates for State Legislation and S-Ind District –**
 1. **Accessory Dwelling Units** – This is to bring the City’s regulations in line with the new State rules. Mr. Sawyer reviewed the changes. The State statutes allows Accessory Dwelling Units under 900 square feet.
 2. **Existing Small Lots** - The State revised the treatment of Existing Small Lots. The Commission discussed the wording in the new proposal.
 3. **Parking in Service Industrial District** - The rules would change to state that the parking is allowed in front of and to the side of Principal Buildings in the Service-Industrial District
 4. **Approval Criteria** - This disallows a proposal to be denied due to the character of the area.
 5. **Prohibits imposing conditions on ADUs on Existing Small Lots** – No discussion.
- **Design Review and other aspects of Residential-Professional proposal** – There were no new materials to review.

- **Other** – None.

5. General Business

- **Planning and Development update** – None
- **Next Planning Commission priorities check-in** – Not discussed
- **Review next meeting time, date and format** – **June 17, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via remote connection.**
- **Other** – None.

- 6. Adjourn** – Vice-Chair Bradeen made a motion to adjourn at 7:30 PM. Member Gawne seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.