

Meeting Minutes
St. Albans City Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
St. Albans City Hall, 100 North Main Street
6:00 PM Monday June 18, 2018

Approved July 16, 2018

Board Members Present: David Barber, Chair; Luke Richter; Michael Gawne; Stan Bradeen; Amy Paradis

Board Members Absent: Jackie DesLauriers

Staff Present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development; Wendy Coy, Minute Taker

Public Present: Laz Scangas, Natalie Sinque

1. Open Meeting

a. Discuss additions or deletions to the agenda – None.

2. Approval of Minutes - Member Gawne asked that the date of the second motion be corrected.

Member Gawne made a motion to approve the minutes of May 21, 2018 as amended to clarify that the second minutes motion was for April 16, 2018. Member Richter seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Discuss Land Development Regulations

a. Historic Preservation in Neighborhoods – Mr. Sawyer presented the changes that the City would like to see applied to Article 7. Member Gawne asked if this has been discussed with the City attorney. Mr. Sawyer stated that he had not recently spoken to the City Attorney about this regulation. Member Bradeen stated that this is clearly in the design review section so where does Article 7 apply and what is the Commission's intent? Mr. Scangas stated that if the building is in the Historic District it will be on the National Register. Mr. Sawyer asked what the Commission's intent was for the houses outside of the Historic District. Should there be a regulatory approach or a different approach. How much of a burden does the City want to place on the homeowner. Mr. Scangas stated that, if there is a historic building in the Design Review District but not in a Historic District, it doesn't have to follow the Historic Design standards. Mr. Scangas suggested that, if the Planning Commission wishes to set a certain construction date to qualify for historic preservation rules, then the Commission should review the buildings in the Design Review District to make sure that the City is not missing a building that it would like to see preserved.

b. Historic Preservation/Demolition and Design Standards – Mr. Sawyer stated that the Commission needs to decide what its intentions are for the neighborhoods in the City. Member Bradeen stated that the Commission needs to have a discussion about the

adaptive reuse of some buildings. Member Richter commented that sometimes the old homes don't allow people to age inside of them. Chair Barber stated that he doesn't have a problem with making a change for economic viability. There is nothing that enforces the historic preservation of the older buildings. He has a concern with the demolition and reconstruction of older buildings. A building recently burned on Brainerd Street and the third floor was destroyed. He is concerned that the new building will be built in a modern easy style that does not contribute or fit into the character of the neighborhood. Mr. Sawyer stated that the Commission needs to decide what it wants to preserve. Member Bradeen stated that the Commission also needs to discuss density. The lot coverage is not consistent with this piece. Mr. Scangas stated that the City has to have a set of rules which will be difficult to create. He suggested that the City have a form based code. There are specific attributes that should be preserved. Density, porches, setbacks, massing, scale and style. Massing is a term in architecture which refers to the perception of the general shape and form as well as size of a building. Mr. Sawyer informed the Commission about the City's Public Housing Code. This code has allowed the City to enforce some standards in terms of the public / rental housing in the City. This code does not apply to the single family residences. Mr. Sawyer suggested that we create neighborhood design review districts as each neighborhood as its own characteristics and character. Every home that is being built would need to go in front of the Design Advisory Board. Member Bradeen asked how hard headed does the Commission and City want to be. Member Richter has no problem with all homes being built going before the Design Advisory Board. Mr. Sawyer stated that David Southwick is already having a problem applying Article 7 to every house in the City. These are not decisions that should be made by one person.

- c. **Other Business** – Chair Barber reviewed the memo that Mr. Sawyer submitted to the Commission listing the items that need to be addressed by the Commission first. Mr. Sawyer stated that some of these items were wordsmithing. Chair Barber stated that he would be comfortable with Mr. Sawyer drafting the wording of these items and having the Commission review them.
- d. **Update on Route 7 Livability Connection Project** - Mr. Sawyer discussed the walk of Northern Route 7. VTRANS wants more time to get information together to give to the consultants. The public hearing has been postponed until VTRANS is ready. The grant deadline will be extended. Member Bradeen asked if there was any public comment on the bike lanes. Mr. Sawyer did present the Planning Commission's concerns but he has not heard back from the consultants. Member Bradeen was concerned about the bike lanes looking good on the plans but, when executed, the lanes not being used by the public. He does not feel that striped bike lanes are a good solution. Member Gawne stated that, from a legal point, the striped bike lanes give bikers a place on the road. Mr. Sawyer stated that they asked for an immediate solution and what an ideal long term solution would be. The striped bike lanes are part of the immediate solution. He added that some member of the public like the striped bike lanes. Member Richter

stated that it is a case of drivers getting used to striped bike lanes. Chair Barber stated a concern of the stripes wearing off and how often will the striped need to be painted.

- e. **Planning & Development Update** – Chair Barber stated that he has appreciated the Planning & Development emails that Mr. Sawyer has been sending to the Commission. No members had any questions concerning the update.
 - f. **Other** – None
4. **Public Comment** – Ms. Natalie Sinque resides at the Lake Champlain Housing Trust. She has some concerns about landlords not properly maintaining the building that she lives in. She also expressed a concern with the treatment of people who are in the park. Mr. Sawyer stated that he would speak to her after the meeting.
5. **Adjourn** – Member Gawne made a motion to adjourn at 8:00. Member Bradeen seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.