

MEETING MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION, REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
6:00 PM MONDAY JULY 16, 2018

Approved August 20, 2018

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

Board Members Absent: Jackie DesLauriers; Luke Richter

Staff Present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development; Wendy Coy, minute taker

Public Present: None.

- 1. Open Meeting – Chair Barber opened the meeting at 6:02 pm.**
 - a. Discuss additions or deletions to the agenda – Member Paradis suggested that we end the meeting at 7:45 pm due to paving on Main Street.

- 2. Approval of Minutes:** Member Gawne made two corrections to the minutes.
Member Barber made a motion to approve the minutes of June 18, 2108 as amended.
Member Paradis seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

- 3. Discuss Land Development Regulations –**
 - a. Historic preservation / demolition - Mr. Sawyer reviewed the goals that came out of last meeting. Member Bradeen expressed a concern that there be adequate time for the City and the developer/owner to consider the best options for historic preservation. He questioned whether there was something to be gained to have an informal discussion before the DRB process. Mr. Sawyer stated that the applicant can recess a hearing on their own and the DRB can recess a hearing. The City cannot. If the Commission wanted to make sure the City has a chance to recess, then the proposed delay scenario would be the best option. Member Bradeen wondered whether it would be strange for the DRB to be at odds with the City. Member Gawne stated that 24 V.S.A. Sec. 4468 exists and that it should be sufficient. He stated that the City administrator can suggest that the owner / developer go to the City Council to get input. He did not like the 90 day option as it opens the City up being accused of delaying an application. The City should not be given 90 days if the other applicants is not given the same amount of time. Member Bradeen stated that it seems to be less of a legal issue than a case of wanting to encourage an open minded discourse between the City and the owner. There could be a simple statement that applicants are encouraged to discuss with the City Council and the neighbors first. Chair Barber stated that he was ready to sign off on this but other members of the Commission wanted to do away with the 90 day delay period. He stated that the Commission could vote tonight but he thought that it would be a terrible

mistake. If you take away the 90 period, you are not giving the City a chance to step in. Member Bradeen observed that without a good administration it makes no difference what is written. Mr. Sawyer stated that the first two columns are a legal stretch. The first column is the longest legal stretch. The middle column is giving the municipality a chance to step in. The other benefit of going with the recess is that, during the DRB hearing, all evidence is brought. It builds an inherent flexibility into the process before the application is completely filed. Chair Barber asked to straw poll the Commission on a 30 day delay option. Member Bradeen stated that he would like to find a way to make a delay defensible. Member Paradis stated that she would be comfortable with a 30 option but not much longer than that. If the application takes too long, the building will stand empty. Member Gawne stated that he thought a 30 day delay was defensible and that it would be in the interest of all including the neighborhood to not have the buildings empty. After an application is deemed complete, the City has 30 days to refer it to the DRB. Mr. Sawyer stated that buildings that have been burned are not a good representation of this policy as the City's public safety code supersedes demolition codes. The Commission took a straw poll and approved changing the 90 calendar days to 30 calendar days. The Commission agreed that they have finished their review of the proposed Historic Preservation and Historic Demolition rules.

- b. Goals for Design Standards in Neighborhoods and Downtown** - Mr. Sawyer previewed a matrix that he had started by which all various different design districts are listed and then it listed the goals and objectives. It designated each district and the goals for each districts. He reviewed the different districts. DR1 – Historic District. DR2 - Downtown Expansion. DR3 - Residential Main Street. DR4 – Gateway. Mr. Sawyer stated that the City had talked about changing some of the Districts. The proposals were eliminating the Gateway and making it a part of DR3. Add Fairfield to DR3. Remove any house on Lower Newton that doesn't front on Main Street from DR2. Member Bradeen asked what the City's goals were for the west side of Federal Street. Mr. Sawyer stated that it is currently zoned service / industrial. Member Bradeen liked the chart and the zoned maps to focus the discussions. He would like to encourage appropriate investments in the residential areas. Chair Barber liked the chart but wanted to pull out what was already applied to residential. Member Bradeen stated that he knew the Commission was interested in preserving the character of the neighborhoods. He asked if there should there be different districts for different residential neighborhoods. The Commission would need to consider where they are drawing lines. He wondered if there were carrots or sticks that could be used to encourage investment in our neighborhoods. Could something be done with the City's form based codes that could encourage investments and designs in the City's neighborhoods? Member Paradis asked what impact would this have on the staff. Mr. Sawyer stated that, as this was for new building applications only, it didn't have that much of an effect. Member Bradeen stated that the Commission might want to look at specific ideas for new buildings and shouldn't exterior renovations on existing buildings go through the same review as new

buildings. Member Paradis stated that the City can't make it too hard to renovate homes due to people not wanting to go through the process. Chair Barber stated that he loves to have historic homes but not necessarily think that historical materials need to be used during renovations. For example, the placement of asphalt shingles vs. the original shingles when renovating a home. Member Paradis stated that she was not in favor of ending the grandfather clause that has been built into the regulations. She thought that it would have an effect on lower priced rental units that are already hard to find.

c. Other – None.

4. Other Business

- a. Update on Route 7 Livability Connection Project – Mr. Sawyer stated that the first public presentation is August 14th at the NMC Green Mountain Room at 6:30 pm
- b. Planning & Development Update – No other updates

5. Public Comment – None

6. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 PM.