

**MINUTES**  
**ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET**  
**5:30 PM MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2023**

*Approved March 20, 2023*

**Commission Members Present:** Denise Smith, Chair; Carl Watkins, Vice Chair; Michael Gawne, Alternate; Janis Appel, Amy Burleson.

**Commission Members Absent:** Courtney Seale, Alternate;

**City Staff present:** Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning and Development; Paul Clapps, Minute Taker.

**Members of the public present:** Jeremiah Lacrosse

1. **D. Smith begins the meeting at 5:31.**
  - a. There is an introduction of attendees.
  - b. There's a discussion about how it can be difficult for Monday meetings when holidays fall on Mondays. This applies to travel plans, schools, etc.
  
2. **D. Smith starts the discussion on extending the Design Review District to 12 North Elm.**
  - a. C. Sawyer mentions that the owners of 12 North Elm want to be added to the DR2 Design Review District. This is a property that was formerly "Elm Street School"
  - b. C. Sawyer also mentions that the property owner would like to access the historical property tax credits since the building is older.
  - c. D. Smith and J. Appel ask if there are any negatives to approving this.
  - d. C. Sawyer says that now they'll need to abide by Design Review District rules, but this will also need to be approved by the state.

**M. Gawne motions to warn the official hearing for 12 North Elm Street added to the Design Review District of St. Albans. J. Appel seconds the motion. A. Burleson abstains since she's a property owner. All others vote aye. The motion is approved.**

3. **D. Smith moves onto General Business so the minutes can be approved.**

**C. Watkins motions to approve the minutes from January 16, 2023, as presented. A. Burleson abstains from the motion. M. Gawne seconds the motion. No further discussion. All aside from A. Burleson vote aye. The motion is approved.**

4. **D. Smith moves on to consider warned amendments concerning fences.**

- a. C. Sawyer presents the new draft of the fencing regulations. M. Gawne asks about the “missing paint” section, and there is discussion as to whether or not “chipping paint” is an all-encompassing term.
- b. There is also a discussion as to what someone can do if they don’t have the economic ability to take care of their fence, but they still need it.
- c. J. Appel is concerned that a good portion of the city is struggling economically and might be targeted by this rule. C. Sawyer says that the city can make adjustments on a case by case basis, this rule just gives them the power to address the issue in the first place.
- d. M. Gawne proposes changing the wording to specify that paint can’t be peeling on the “front setback.” C. Watkins thinks that any setback needs to be a part of it, since a fence could be right on the property line.
- e. D. Smith confirms that this is currently a public hearing. C. Sawyer specifies that this is the only change from last month as well. C. Watkins mentions that there was a discussion last month on the 10ft rule. Instead of changing the height, the commission can just request approval for certain exceptions that go high.
- f. There is more discussion over the use of a 10ft fence and who might build one. The PC agrees on 4.5 feet for the front setback and 8ft as a compromise for anywhere other than the front setback.

**C. Watkins motions to refer the amendment concerning final verbiage for fences to city council. Seconded by A. Burleson. No further discussion. All vote aye. The motion is approved.**

5. D. Smith moves on to the City Plan update.
  - a. C. Sawyer begins his presentation of the city plan. Chapter one discusses the purpose and uses of the City Plan. This then leads to the goals, objectives, and policies of the City Plan.
  - b. M. Gawne mentions that some of these changes from 2017 are not in his Vermont State Statutes from 2019, so they could be missing. C. Sawyer specifies that he gets the statutes online, but the Regional Planning Commission can help with that.
  - c. M. Gawne also starts a discussion about how the Planning Commission can represent the people. For instance, C. Watkins is a tenant and not a homeowner, which gives him a valuable perspective for the new City Plan.
  - d. J. Appel asks whether the City Plan reflects some of the social issues going on, such as substance abuse. C. Sawyer confirms that these social issues are mentioned in the plan, but the PC can also add comments when the specific section of the plan is being reviewed.
  - e. D. Smith thinks a whole section on recreation is going to be important for the PC to review. Health equity of the community might be another section that can be added or at least discussed.
  - f. D. Smith recommends that the PC create a list of topics to discuss when we get to the specific part of the City Plan. M. Gawne proceeds to discuss a few edits to the City Plan. (The spelling of “St. Albans” vs. “Saint Albans” and keeping it consistent, etc.)

- i. D. Smith makes an additional comment on page 2. The fact that the City Plan’s purpose, listed as “to comply with State statutes for land use planning and regulation” should not be the first one listed that way. C. Sawyer mentions that it’s listed first because the City Plan is specifically mentioned in the State statute, so utility providers, for instance, can reference this document as listed.
    - ii. C. Watkins asks if a preface can be written in the beginning. The Planning Commission agrees on the addition of a preface. D. Smith says it could even be a “Letter From the Planning Commission” signed by the commission members.
  - g. J. Appel mentions that the plan specifically talks about “safety,” and she asks if this will include any provisions about gun ownership in the city. C. Sawyer advises the PC not to put any verbiage in the City Plan that the City Council might vote to take out.
  - h. D. Smith also wants to make sure that there’s a discussion on different kinds of safety, like BIPOC members of the community feeling unsafe, or community members feeling unsafe due to gender identity. C. Watkins states that a mention of the Police Advisory Board, or the removal of school resource officers could be important in the safety section of the plan.
  - i. D. Smith proposes pausing here on the City Plan due to time constraints. C. Sawyer asks the commission to review chapters 2 and 3 for next month.
6. D. Smith moves on to discuss the review workplan and other amendment proposals.
- a. C. Sawyer starts by saying these changes are needed in order to allow development of the Fonda Site. The city currently has a goal to create 200 more housing units. Changing multi-family dwelling regulations will allow for more housing in previously commercial areas.
  - b. A. Burleson leaves the meeting at 7:19pm.

**C. Watkins motions to warn a proposal for the next meeting with the expectation that language will be agreed upon for the Fonda Site development. Seconded by J. Appel. No further discussion. M. Gawne abstains. All others vote aye. The motion is approved.**

7. M. Gawne moves on to definitions.
- a. He asks how far the PC will get with definitions for the next month. C. Sawyer proposes child care, adult care, communal housing, and home occupation for next month. This is agreed.
  - b. There is a brief discussion on the definition of Communal Housing.

**8. M. Gawn motions to adjourn. C. Watkins seconds. All vote aye. Meeting is adjourned at 7:30 PM.**