

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
5:30 PM MONDAY, MAY 15, 2022

Approved June 19, 2023

Commission Members Present: Denise Smith, Chair (Via Zoom); Carl Watkins, Vice Chair; Michael Gawne, Alternate; Courtney Seale, Alternate (Via Zoom); Janis Appel;

Commission Members Absent: Amy Burleson.

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

Members of the public present: Chris Dermody, Mary Harbaugh, Dan Rohrbach, Katy Dynarski

1. Begin Recording and Open Meeting. C. Watkins began the meeting at 5:38.

- Introduction of Attendees
- Public comment on issues not on agenda.
 - Mary Harbaugh began with her request to appoint an energy and climate advisory committee. The purpose of this would be to create a plan that synchronizes with the city plan.
 - M. Gawne asked about the specifics of an “energy and climate plan.”
 - M. Harbaugh specified that it would include all sorts of energy sources, recommendations, tree planting on business sites, proposals for grants, outreach, etc. This committee set-up would require a lot of cooperation with the city. M. Harbaugh requests that the city plan reflect some of what is being discussed by the energy and climate committee.
 - C. Watkins wants to incorporate some of these committee goals when the energy and climate chapters of the city plan are discussed.
 - C. Sawyer gave an overview on what the city plan is.
 - There was a general agreement with the members of the PC that this should be coordinated with the city plan discussion in the future.
- Discuss additions or deletions to agenda.
 - None
- Assignment of alternates
 - C. Seale and M. Gawne were voting members.

- **M. Harbaugh left the meeting at 5:55.**

2. Presentation by Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District

- K. Dynarski began her presentation. The NRCD is going around and sharing details on who they are and where there might be overlap with city planning. She gave an overview on their overall goals. They offer clean water project planning, tree plantings, stream and floodplain restoration, stormwater infrastructure, tree sales, fishing programs, and more.
- **D. Smith joined the meeting at 6:02.**
- K. Dynarski also gave an update on other organizations working in the Franklin County area. The NRCD works closely with these partners. She left contact information in case the PC would like to coordinate with them.
- M. Gawne wanted to coordinate in the future when discussing the climate part of the city plan. C. Watkins agreed and wanted to highlight resources that the city can use.
- C. Dermody asked about what a city growth center meant. C. Sawyer answered by saying the state considers St. Albans City a growth center due to certain metrics.

3. Discuss Update of City Plan

- C. Sawyer introduced the city plan and the chapters that will be under review. He also mentioned a list of new focus areas for 2025 and the following public input process.
 - There was a brief discussion on the process of the emerging climate and energy advisory committee.
- J. Appel asked C. Sawyer to add an idea which looks at housing through a multigenerational and intergenerational lens. Also she added that something should be included for recreational support.
- D. Smith brought up placemaking, operations, and security. She believed “security” was a different word for “safety.” She also liked the idea of having an “ambassador” of the downtown district. Thirdly, she liked the idea of the “urban meadow” which focuses on letting certain fauna grow out inside of the city (with wildflowers and water). All of this can be accessed with a QR code, which C. Sawyer specified the city is already using.
- J. Appel specified that QR codes should be encouraged as long as the City improves its access to free Wi-Fi. She also liked the idea of a district ambassador. J. Appel also discussed learning opportunities in the city plan, like collaboration with BFA.
- M. Gawne began giving his notes on Chapter 3 of the city plan.
 - There was a brief discussion on “repurposing” neighborhoods and the usage of the parking garage.
- J. Appel started a discussion on guns and safety in the community (in regards to neighborhoods in chapter 3)

- There was a brief discussion on when the Montpelier legislation would be discussed in the meeting.
- C. Sawyer would like to have a few meetings where the PC goes through policies, programs, and activities, and ensure the ideas the PC is coming up with are reflected.
- C. Sawyer asked the PC about ending the 2017 city plan review and starting to focus on having open meetings with the public to get input on the next 10 years of the city.
- C. Sawyer believed that some questions could be developed that are *based* on the chapters of the city plan, so there's at least some coverage of all the plan subjects. D. Smith agreed and believes the PC needs to be more strategic on soliciting input. (Potlucks, walks, and other activities are a few ideas mentioned)
- D. Rohrbach asked about what the 2025 plan means, C. Sawyer responded by explaining why the plan is labeled for 2025 (it has to be redone every 8 years).
- C. Dermody reminded the PC that a past survey done about the desire for sidewalks made a huge impact on the community.
- J. Appel mentioned the difficulty of dealing with distrust in the local government. Amplifying successful programs can help alleviate that problem. J. Appel liked the idea of turning the plan chapters into questions for the public.
- C. Sawyer clarified that the public is going to be able to give input on what should be added, but also on the proposed plan itself. He will come up with a campaign and some ideas for the next meeting. He believes that they don't need extra tools or staff members to get public input from a city of about 7,000 people.
- D. Smith wants 3-5 questions (open-ended or multiple choice) to prompt the community into giving input for the city plan. The rest of the PC was in agreement.
- M. Gawne believes this could be a good opportunity for an ambassador to help the PC get public input.
- C. Seale thought that examples can be helpful too, (mentioning the sidewalks or other successes can help invigorate the public).
- D. Rohrbach said that specific questions or ranking questions could be easier for the public to answer (rank these priorities, or choose an option that you like the most). J. Appel believes there should be both.
- There is no further discussion on the city plan.

4. Review workplan and other regulatory amendment proposals

- The PC skipped this item and moved onto #5.

5. Update on land use-related legislation in Montpelier

- C. Sawyer stated that bill S.100 has passed the Vermont house and senate. He was still looking for the full bill. He commended C. Watkins who put together a powerful statement and provided testimony to a house committee. However, with this, C. Sawyer believes that every municipality will have a 1-parking space per dwelling

- limit. This can be rounded up to 2 for single family homes. There's a discussion on how many cars the typical family (even teenager) has in the city.
- D. Smith asked about the kinds of partnerships the city can build to help mitigate S-100's effects. There was further discussion on the city's narrow streets, speed, and other factors that impact local transportation.
 - **C. Dermody left the meeting at 7:22.**
 - C. Sawyer would build a list of suggestions to get immediate reactions, concerns, and inputs from the PC.
 - There was no additional discussion.

6. General Business

- Approval of Minutes
- **Motion by D. Smith to approve the minutes of April 17, 2023, as presented. Seconded by M. Gawne. The motion passed with all in favor. There was no discussion.**
- With Juneteenth being adopted as a holiday, C. Sawyer confirmed that the PC was okay with the next meeting being on June 19.

7. Motion by M. Gawn to adjourn. Seconded by D. Smith. The motion passed with all in favor at 7:26. There was no discussion.