

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING – SPECIAL LOCATION
BEGINNING AT THE ROOM AT 14TH STAR BREWING COMPANY, 133 NORTH MAIN STREET AND THEN
WALKING ALONG NORTH MAIN STREET, LOWER NEWTON STREET, AND FEDERAL STREET
5:30 PM MONDAY, AUGUST 15, 2022

Approved September 19, 2022

Members of the Commission Present: Denise Smith, Chair; Lauren Dees-Erickson, Vice Chair; Michael Gawne; Carl Watkins, Alternate; Courtney Seale, Alternate.

Members of the Commission Absent: Amy Burleson; Zachary Nuse.

City Staff Present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning and Development; Angela Bernard, Minute Taker.

Members of the Public Present: Jan Appel; Bethany Johnson; Aaron Garceau; Nathaniel Olgivie; Liesl Ulrich-Verderber; Mitchell Craib; Roger Parent; Lucy Parent; Connie Warden; Jason Savoy; Wendy Morrill; Jeff Morrill (arrived during the walking portion of the meeting).

1. Open Meeting at The Room at 14th Star – **D. Smith opened the meeting at 5:33 PM.**

- a. Introduction of attendees – introductions were made
- b. Public Comment on issues not on agenda – none
- c. Discuss additions or deletions to agenda – none
- d. Assignment of Alternates – C. Watkins and C. Seale were both appointed alternates for this meeting.

2. Presentation and public input of Residential-Professional District proposal.

C. Sawyer introduced the presentation and history of the proposed Residential-Professional District.

C. Sawyer presented all members of the public and the commission with a handout that included maps of the District and a detailed background on where the idea for a new District came from and what the project would mean for people living in the area. C. Sawyer explained that creation of this District would help preserve the North Main Street area and make it so that developers and business owners could not come in and put certain types of businesses there (such as gas stations). The handout presented to members included a new list of businesses that would not be allowed in such a district, as well as a list of some that would be.

C. Sawyer opened the floor to comments and questions from members of the public.

C. Warden asked about the map handout and inquired about the meaning behind its color coding. C. Sawyer explained.

C. Sawyer told the group that final creation of a Residential-Professional District would come after a series of meetings – one that would include an official hearing and vote by the Planning Commission, as well as two hearings and meetings with the City Council to address any concerns.

J. Appel asked about the possibility of taking even more business types off the list of "allowed uses." M. Gawne said any business could be removed from the list.

C. Warden asked if a traffic plan is part of the proposal. She commented that traffic along that stretch of North Main Street has gotten more congested and noisier in recent years.

J. Appel asked about what the commission is looking for specifically from residents during this meeting. M. Gawne replied that they are looking for public input.

N. Ogilvie asked if building owners in the District would have to get permission every time they want to change something on their home if this proposal passes. C. Sawyer explained that they would have to get permission to change exterior elements already and nothing would be changing in that regard.

C. Warden asked about Accessory Dwelling Units. C. Sawyer explained that the City always follows Vermont state law and the regulations required. He explained that this proposal would mean that housing wouldn't be changing, only the type of businesses allowed in the District.

J. Appel suggested thinking about the list of uses that are allowed under this proposal and considering how they would affect traffic in an already congested area.

C. Warden agreed that traffic is a problem and would need to be addressed.

C. Sawyer suggested that residents come to a City Hall meeting to present their suggestions for allowed vs. unallowed business uses.

3. Begin walk north on Main Street.

The group left 14th Star and proceeded to the corner of Brainerd and Main Street to begin their walk, heading north. The group stopped across from Best Court, where C. Sawyer explained that this proposed redistricting would also mean a new designation for the small side street to a High Density Residential district.

C. Warden asked if Lower Newton and North Main Street could be redistricted to High Density Residential as well. C. Sawyer said he wouldn't recommend it. C. Warden said there are older homes in that area. D. Smith explained that easiest way to maintain the older buildings might be to turn them into allowed businesses. M. Gawne said it might entice new businesses for those older buildings.

C. Warden expressed concern about changing the neighborhood. C. Sawyer asked if C. Warden is advocating for fewer allowed businesses. C. Warden said she isn't advocating, but that traffic and noise are worth considering.

C. Sawyer explained that the list of "allowed businesses" is just an ideal and probably won't happen, and that housing is more important to the area right now.

A. Garceau said this proposal would eliminate the types of businesses that cause increased traffic.

The walking tour crossed Main Street at Newton and made its way up North Main Street on the western side, making several small stops along the way.

The tour concluded at the end of the sidewalk near the shopping center, where there was extensive conversation regarding the possibility of extending the city sidewalk further north, with C. Sawyer explaining that it would necessitate conversation with the business owners in the plaza.

4. End walk and adjourn meeting.

Members of the public were encouraged to contact the City or Commission members with additional comments and concerns.

Tour ended and meeting was adjourned at 6:56 PM.