

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Benjamin Eddy Bldg., 6 South Killingly Road
Wednesday, August 17, 2022

A. Call to Order

Warren Ducharme called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

B. Roll Call

Planning Board Members: Mike Carpenter; Warren Ducharme; Susan Joyce; David Paolissi; Secretary, Hilary Downes-Fortune.

Excused: Anthony Renzi; George Sackal

Staff present: Michael Antonellis, Planner; Joanna Achille, Solicitor

Public present: Dave Rathbun; Amita Rodman

C. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion to approve the July 6, 2022 minutes. Mr. Carpenter made a motion; Ms. Downes-Fortune seconded. No discussion. Motion passed 5-0.

D. Recommendation to Town Council: Selection of the Economic Development Strategic Plan Consultant

All consultants' proposals were submitted electronically and posted in the Planning Board Dropbox for review. Mr. Antonellis stated that he deliberately requested the proposals reflect 3 phases of work, but cost breakdown by phase was optional. He also mentioned that the town originally earmarked \$35,000 of ARPA funds for this project, but it was increased to \$40,000. Mr. Antonellis noted the following:

- Amarach Planning Services did not address the full scope of work, therefore they are out of the running.
- HCH Enterprises: Mr. Antonellis explained that he had sent 4 general questions to all firms that submitted proposals, as well as additional questions that pertained to each specific proposal. HCH did not have any sample projects under their brand to submit.
- Weston & Sampson has a local member of their team (Susan Mara) but did not note any specific examples of projects like ours.
- StreetSense, NextMove and Better City's cost estimates are way above our budget (which they knew ahead of time); NextMove resubmitted a lower cost estimate but are still out of the running.
- Camoin Associates submitted a good packet but their price is still above our budget; they have a local office in North Kingstown but their main office is in Saratoga Springs, NY.

- The Lakota Group and RKG Associates had good submittals, as did Weston & Sampson and Fourth Economy. Mr. Antonellis stated that in response to his question regarding experience, Weston & Sampson indicated that their firm is more geared to engineering and transportation; they also stated that they use a holistic approach to projects.

Ms. Joyce told us that she had read all of the proposals and ranked her choices as follows: 1st: Weston & Sampson; 2nd: Camoin (even though their price was above the known budget); and 3rd: Lakota. She said she felt the Fourth Economy proposal lacked substance, and she did not like the way RKG assigned tasks to the town as well as the lack of diversity in their staff.

Mr. Carpenter said that he feels that submittal quality reflects a firm's capabilities. His top 4 choices are RKG, Lakota, Camoin, and Weston & Sampson, and Weston & Sampson is strongest because of their location. He also noted that Weston & Sampson have environmental capabilities should that become an issue.

Mr. Antonellis stated that it may be important to engage a firm that could implement the plan, and that Camoin and Weston & Sampson have this capability. Planning Board members noted that Camoin is a full-service firm and their proposal showed that a great deal of legwork was done in preparing their submittal. We agreed that we should recommend hiring Camoin as our first choice, if the town can find the extra funds needed, and if not, Weston & Sampson would be our next choice.

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion. Mr. Carpenter made a motion to have Mr. Antonellis draft a recommendation to the Town Council to hire Camoin Associates as our first choice for the Economic Development Strategic Plan Consultant, with our second choice being Weston and Sampson. Ms. Downes-Fortune seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

E. Five Year Road and Bridge Plan

Mr. Antonellis said that Beta Engineering's pavement report was completed about a year ago, and the Planning Board's task is to create a Five-Year Road and Bridge Plan based in large part on Beta's plan. Mr. Carpenter noted that Beta's plan is for pavement maintenance, not long-term replacement, which would require capital investment. He also stated that Beta's plan does not address bridge replacement. Ms. Rodman noted that DPW Director Gordon Rogers was given a tool to input updated information, and Mr. Antonellis agreed, stating that Beta sold the town a service, with Mr. Rogers providing updates periodically.

Mr. Antonellis stated that the last Five-Year Plan was completed in 2017, and we can use this as a template. Mr. Carpenter will work with Mr. Antonellis and Mr. Rogers on drafting the new plan.

F. Comprehensive Plan—Public Hearing

Public hearing to discuss approval of the draft Comprehensive Plan (continued from 7/6/22)

Mr. Antonellis stated that under the section Housing Opportunities there are some action items we could add to address the 10% requirement:

- HOA14: provide additional senior housing
- Allow OpenSpace/Conservation Subdivisions (cluster development)
- Allow subdivisions with private roadways (not maintained by the town)
- Allow accessory dwelling units (ex. in-law apartments)
- Require inclusionary development: developers must include X% affordable housing

Mr. Carpenter noted that this still doesn't address the issue of cesspools in older homes, particularly those located in historic villages in town. He stated that some of these homes could be subject to condemnation in the future if their septic systems are not addressed.

Ms. Rodman said that she had some general comments on the Draft Comprehensive Plan:

- The plan needs some “connective tissue” between the sections.
- Consider how to attract people to visit Foster, not necessarily move here (for economic development purposes).
- Plan makes lots of recommendations for future zoning changes, but they're not prioritized. (Mr. Antonellis noted that prioritization is included in the Implementation Plan, which is a separate document.)

Mr. Antonellis then addressed Ann Grenier's written comments regarding the Draft Comprehensive Plan (Historic and Cultural Resources Implementation Actions) in a letter dated August 16, 2022. Specifically, she recommended that the 1982 RIHPC Inventory of Historic Houses and Sites be updated, as “several of the old houses are now gone, demolished, burned, decayed to a state requiring demolition.” We discussed that this could be done by members of the Foster Preservation Society.

Mr. Antonellis said he would draft a motion for approval of the Comprehensive Plan for next week. He also noted that he has completely revised the Land Use section about Route 6 and this is available for review on the town website.

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Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion to continue the public hearing. Ms. Joyce made a motion to continue the public hearing to the next meeting on September 7, 2022. Ms. Downes-Fortune seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

G. Adjournment

Mr. Ducharme asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Downes-Fortune made a motion to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 9:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Hilary Downes-Fortune, Secretary