



City of Barre, Vermont
"Granite Center of the World"

Agenda for the Planning Commission

Meeting held on Thursday, July 22, 2021 ~ 6:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting (in-person and Virtual)

Council Chambers in City Hall and Zoom Virtual meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87952296021?pwd=dnFXT3hqUkg3OXVHa1M0OG9LYzBIQT09>

Meeting ID: 879 5229 6021

Passcode: 469486

Phone: 1 (929) 205-6099 US (New York – Long distance rates will apply)

1. Call to Order
2. Adjustments to the Agenda
3. Public Comment (*for something that is not on the agenda*)
4. Old Business:
 - A. Review and approval of June 24, 2021 meeting minutes
 - B. Continue discussion of Housing Whitepaper with future steps
5. New Business
6. Staff Updates
7. Roundtable
8. Adjourn

Planning Commission meetings are open to the public.

For questions about accessibility or to request accommodation, please call (802) 477-1465.

Barre City Planning Commission

June 24, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Present: David Sichel (Chair), Jackie Calder (Vice Chair), Michael Hellein (Secretary), Amanda Gustin, Thomas Lauzon, Jim McWilliam, Rachel Rudi

Staff: Janet Shatney (Director of Planning, Permitting & Assessing), Steven Mackenzie (City Manager)

Visitors: Lucas Herring (Mayor)

1. Call to Order

6:30pm

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

No adjustments.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Old business

- A. Approve meeting minutes of June 10, 2021

Motion: Gustin, Second Calder, Approved

- B. Continue discussion of Housing Whitepaper

Gustin provided whitepaper text in advance of meeting, and Sichel provided edits. Gustin described process of creating whitepaper, how she tried to include housing recommendations without sprawling out into related topics. Gustin asked if it would be appropriate to prioritize next steps extracted from the Plan, and Hellein responded that the current page order was good and Council was able to use their judgement to choose which to take action on. Hellein said that the document looked good and the edits were acceptable and that with another pass for grammar it would be ready to go.

McWilliam asked if we had done due diligence about demand for denser housing. Hellein responded that it's a good question, but not one we need to know the answer to today, because we can recommend what

works best in cities like Barre and learn in the future whether there are blocks that make that impossible. Sichel pointed out that we will learn about feasibility from individual projects. Gustin noted that some answers on demand come from the real estate sales data, but there are things we still need to learn.

Mayor Herring questioned whether the document would be helpful in its current form. There was lengthy discussion about how and whether to make the whitepaper more useful, and there was confusion about whether the discussion of housing policy related to ARPA funds distributed to Barre City (two tranches of \$850,000, per Mackenzie) or the significantly larger amount available for housing under the CARES Act. Sichel pointed out that the discussion originated from the CARES Act funding, and Gustin concurred that was the intent.

McWilliam asked Herring what he would expect from the whitepaper. Herring said he would want it to be clear how to connect funding sources to pay for the next steps summarized from the Municipal Plan. Hellein noted that we would typically expect a Planning Department to do that, noting Shatney was not supposed to magically make that happen, but should have staff to serve that need. Shatney said that she was currently looking into possible funding connections to the next steps and informing Mackenzie.

Sichel asked to place the whitepaper on hold until more is known about funding opportunities, and the members assented.

5. New business

A. City Council recommendations discussion from Council meeting Tuesday, June 22, 2021

Mayor Herring presented a list of items City Council requested the Planning Commission address:

- Municipal Plan Implementation Table
 - Assigning a RACI Matrix for items to move forward
 - Discussion on what items may need to be added/removed (i.e. Grocery Store)
- Signage in the Downtown (i.e. non-lit signs within a store's establishment)

- Demolition of property going before the DRB
- Items on the Council's Priority list (i.e. Neighborhood Development Area and Community Rating System, understanding the latter may be something that is not for them to address)
- Strategic Plan
 - Missing Pieces
 - Charter, Ordinance and Policy Review

Calder suggested looking at the list of suggestions from Council at our upcoming meeting so we can work out where to put these on future agendas, and Sichel agreed to put it on an upcoming agenda.

B. July meetings dates discussion

Chair and Vice Chair will not be available for July 8th meeting, so that meeting will be cancelled.

6. Staff Updates

Still no qualified candidates for assessor. Not much development in the city, possibly because of high prices for building materials. McWilliam was appointed to the Planning Commission (welcome!), Hellein was appointed to the Development Review Board.

7. Round Table

Hellein mentioned that he didn't mean to throw Gustin under the bus by criticizing the effectiveness of the whitepaper during discussion, because her work was very good. McWilliam concurred that the work was excellent.

8. Adjourn

8:01pm, **Motion Calder, Second McWilliams, Adjourned**

Barre City Planning Director

From: David Sichel <dsichel@charter.net>
Sent: Friday, July 16, 2021 1:14 PM
To: Barre City Planning Director
Subject: Housing White Paper Next Steps

Hi Janet,

Here is a list of possible recommendations/housing options for which funding might be available to be added to the white paper on housing. This list is in no particular order.

1. Develop a plan for development on paper streets.
2. Beef up home sharing programs.
3. Develop upper stories of downtown buildings.
4. Assistance to people wishing to downsize to a smaller home.
5. Funding to bring vacant housing up to code to allow occupancy.

All of these projects will likely involve public and private partners.

Next steps include:

- Determine who is responsible to get the ball rolling. Perhaps the City Council could convene a meeting of stakeholders or perhaps ask a group such as BADC or Capstone to facilitate and manage the process.
- Determine which stakeholders might be involved and how they can work collaboratively.
- Determine which groups take on which projects.
- Offer City support where needed.

David Sichel

Staff Updates for July 22, 2021 meeting:

1. As Interim Assessor, sent out the changes of appraisal at the end of June. Per statute, a taxpayer has 14 days from the day the changes are mailed (not when received, which is unfortunate), to the time they need to submit any written grievance to the Assessor regarding their assessment, which was July 8, 2021. Grievances were processed within the prescribed 7-day requirement with the assessments finalized and mailed out. The Grand List was set on July 8, 2021. Tax bills will be finalized and mailed out the middle of August.
2. Heather assists the Code Enforcement office annually with the rental registrations, and since mailing out the initial forms in mid-May with a due date of June 30, she is at 77% collected on our landlords list, with approx. \$97,000 collected, which goes into the General Fund.
3. Various electrical, building, zoning and flood hazard permits are being processed by Heather, and when Code Enforcement inspects and closes one of the permits, we administratively close them electronically. This is done so that our records reflect it, and when title searchers research properties for sales, for refinances and for changes in estate, they can see that the permit has been responded to appropriately, or is still open and uninspected at the moment.
4. There were letters sent to businesses in the various commercial districts asking that if signs or other work had been done, especially during COVID, and had not received a proper permit, that they were to come to Planning, Zoning and Assessing to make this right. This was in response to Council discussions of unpermitted signs, or signs that were identified as not meeting the rules.
5. Due to #4, one business on N. Main Street is coming in front of the DRB for a sign variance. This business did not get a permit, nor contact us during COVID to see what was permissible, but at the minimum, it is being addressed.
6. 802 Liquidators at 224 N. Main Street has closed.
7. Apollo's Dog Grooming and dog daycare opened at 224 N. Main Street.
8. The other DRB agenda item will be a façade improvement request at 81 N. Main Street. They seek a façade change approval to update façade, provide two ADA access ramps and new steps to access the two Main Street entrances.
9. The municipal planning grant cycle has been announced. The municipal planning grants allow for certain projects, and funds up to \$22,000, with a local match of 10% of the amount

awarded. Online application opens on September 1, with an application submittal deadline of November 1, 2021. December 2021 the award decisions will be made, and by mid-August next year, a mid-project report is due, with the project completion and funds spent due by end of May 2023.

These funds are used for planning and land use, promotes cooperation, collaboration and the exchange of ideas. Any eligible project **must** have a clear connection the planning and implementation of the municipal plan, and must be in conformance with the regional plan, and statewide smart growth principles, planning goals and land use policies.

Funds may be used for:

- Underwriting expenses for public meetings and hearings, informational workshops, citizen surveys, outreach and notification costs;
- Support research, data collection, capacity studies, inventories, and mapping;
- Pay consultants, interns or regional planning staff associated with a project;
- Purchase development rights, easements, and titles of properties for housing and conservation purposes identified in our plan;
- Purchase materials needed to produce a plan, bylaw, or implement or administer the project, like writing supplies, maps and copies;
- Conduct other non-prohibited activities.

An additional \$500,000 will be available for bylaw modernization, in recognition that there needs to be growth for housing opportunities. This will focus on confronting the state's housing crisis, and expand opportunities for housing, and ready communities for historic investments in housing development.

If we think that parts of our Unified Development Ordinance are not working (i.e., certain zoning district did allow someone to create an additional apartment due to density restrictions, as an example only) we could apply for assistance in the review of our ordinance under this.

Historically, the MPG has been utilized by the City to pay for consultants who assist with zoning bylaw revisions, and municipal plan work. I intend to focus on some of our plan goals and bring forward to you some suggestions to apply, in August or September – your feedback is always welcomed.