

TOWN OF ESSEX
PLANNING COMMISSION DRAFT MINUTES
FEBRUARY 25, 2021

MORE DETAILED DRAFT MINUTES WILL BE POSTED BY 3/5/2021.

Note: This was a virtual meeting on Teams.

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT: Dustin Brusco, Chair; Josh Knox, Vice-Chair; John Mangan, Clerk; David Raphael; Jonathan Schumacher; Tom Furland; and Alternate John Alden.

SELECTBOARD PRESENT: Elaine Haney; Vince Franco; Patrick Murray; Dawn Fleury.

OTHERS PRESENT: Owiso Makuku, Community Development Director; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Darren Schibler, Planner; Deana Stoneback, Administrative Assistant; Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director; Evan Teich, Town Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Town Manager; Steve Shaw; Diane Clemons; Nick Martin; Tracey Delphia; Sharon Zukowski; Patty Davis; Barb Chapin; Bob Klinefelter; Deb Ehler Holland; Irene Wrenner; John Egan; Ken Signorello; Greg Lyon; Michael Hoey-Lukakis; Paul O'Leary; Paula Duke; Roseanne Prestipino; Lorraine Zaloom; Robin Pierce; Annie Cooper; Jean Ashe; Chris Kessler; Alexander LaRosa; Jeremy Matosky; Diana M. Wood; Tom Williams; Dan Petherbridge; Darby Mayville; and Community TV.

Chairman Brusco called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.; took a roll call of the Planning Commissioners present and read the Covid meeting process instructions into the record. Brusco amended the Agenda by moving item 2 'Discussion with the Selectboard' to number 4.

At 6:35 p.m., Selectboard Chair Haney called a Special Select Board meeting to order and called out additions to its Agenda.

AGENDA ITEM 1: PUBLIC COMMENTS: Patty Davis, 9 Hillside Circle, spoke about Biodiversity and Sustainability being our future. She stated that the town needs to shift the way projects are constructed and we the need to better protect the wetlands. She volunteered to be on a subgroup for any task force that may be formed.

AGENDA ITEM 2: MINUTES 2/11/21:

Vice-Chair Knox MOVED and Commissioner Mangan SECONDED a MOTION to approve the 2/11/21 minutes as written. The MOTION passed 7-0.

AGENDA ITEMS 3: OTHER BUSINESS: None.

AGENDA ITEM 4: DISCUSSION WITH SELECTBOARD: ETC|NEXT PLAN (UPDATE TO 1991 TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN):

Owiso Makuku and Darren Schibbler provided an overview. Points of discussion included

- 49 • The ETC|NEXT Plan replaces the 1991 Town Center Master Plan;
- 50 • Extensive public input occurred with the project which started in 2017 and included the
- 51 development of a Steering Committee. They met before and throughout the process of
- 52 the update; a focus group was developed; a survey was sent out to residents in the
- 53 summer, yielding a total of 424 responses; an open house occurred; open discussions at
- 54 the Planning Commission table and behind the scenes with staff and stakeholders;
- 55 • The plan was originally created by the consultants as a prescriptive document and it
- 56 took time to shift it to a more visionary document, which received broad consensus as it
- 57 was being fine-tuned;
- 58 • The location of the ETC|NEXT is at the corner of VT 289/RTE 15 out to the Historic
- 59 Center, including everything in between. This allows you to get to point A & point B.
- 60 • The message the Planning Commission wanted to convey the message that the vision
- 61 for the ETC was to be better connected and more cohesive.
- 62 • The studies showed that citizens wanted to have more bike and pedestrian options
- 63 within the ETC, and have connections to elsewhere; they wanted more retail options
- 64 and affordable housing and protect the natural and scenic resources; including much
- 65 discussion on building height;
- 66 • The Plan is a new vision for the ETC area and includes interconnected, but distinct,
- 67 neighborhoods; cohesive architectural character, respectful of settings; wider variety of
- 68 land uses; multi-modal transportation; common palette of streetscape elements
- 69 supporting activity and commerce; and attention to soils, wetlands and the general
- 70 ecology of the area;
- 71 • These elements would create new opportunities for increased residential density and
- 72 diversity; mixed use development and economic vitality; infill growth and adaptive
- 73 reuse of buildings and land; and visual and physical connections between open space,
- 74 nature and the built environment.
- 75 • This plan allows for the next steps to guide the future zone and planning documents;
- 76 allows for engagement with developers and stakeholders; it establishes the right
- 77 infrastructure, policies and regulations; and it allows to collaborate with municipal
- 78 partners including staff departments, Economic Development; Housing; Energy and
- 79 Conservation and Trails.
- 80 • The goal of making the document be better connected and more cohesive has been
- 81 successful.

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83 The Planning Commission meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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85 PLANNING COMMISSION

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87 By: _____
88 Dustin R. Brusco, Chair
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