

TOWN OF ESSEX
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
January 14, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT: Dustin Brusco, Chair; Joshua Knox, Vice-Chair; John Mangan, Clerk; David Raphael; Tom Furland; Ned Daly; and Jonathan Schumacher (arrived at 6:45 p.m.)

VISITING VILLAGE COMMISSIONER: John Alden.

OTHERS PRESENT: Owiso Makuku, Community Development Director; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Darren Schibler, Planner; John Pitrowski; Andrew Pitrowski; Paula Duke; Annie Cooper; Tracy Delphia; Katie Ballard; Ken Signorelli and Sharon Zukowski.

Chairman Brusco stated that the Village Planning Commissioners were invited to attend this meeting. He stated that they will continue to invite the Village Planning Commissioners in an attempt for more collaboration. He thanked Commissioner John Alden for his attendance. Alden stated that if needed, he would sit in the meeting as the designated alternate for the application since one of the Commissioners was expected to arrive late.

Chairman Brusco noted the changes to the Agenda.

AGENDA ITEM 1: PUBLIC COMMENTS: Darren Schibler described a minor correction to Condition 7 of the Draft Consent Agenda Approval letter. The PC had no issue with the correction, and there was no other discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 2: CONSENT AGENDA: Boundary Line Adjustment: Andrew Pitrowski: Proposal to redraw a boundary line to accommodate a SFH on the undeveloped lot located at 306 & 314 Lost Nation Road in the Agriculture-Residential (AR) Zone. Tax Map 13, Parcels 15 & 15-1.

Commissioner Furland MOVED and Vice-Chair Knox SECONDED a MOTION to approve the Consent Agenda Boundary Line Adjustment application for 306 & 314 Lost Nation Road, with the following correction:

Condition 7 to read, "Prior to the issuance of a zoning permit for the new dwelling on Lot 2, the applicant shall pay the gravel road fee of \$1,079.59, or the fees in place at the time of application."

The MOTION passed 6-0. (Commissioner Schumacher had not yet arrived.)

AGENDA ITEM 3: INTRODUCTION/DISCUSSION:

- **ANNIE COOPER – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Annie Cooper thanked the PC for the invitation and for all the work they do for the Town. She reported that she was recently appointed to the Economic Development Commission (EDC), and is also the Chair as Jim Bernegger, former Chair, stepped down and retired from the EDC. She noted that she moved to Essex in 1996, with 2 young children, living on Sand Hill Road,

49 and now resides in the Village since approximately 2008. She talked about the recent
50 project, entitled ‘Out and About’ that the EDC worked on with the town and village
51 planning departments. A \$10,000 dollar grant was given to both the town and village. A
52 \$15.00 coupon was given to Essex residents to spend on Essex businesses.
53 Approximately 40 businesses participated in the project. The function also included
54 bands and musicians situated in both the town and village. She was happy to report that it
55 was a tremendous success. She has started a local business and contact sheet as a result
56 of this project.

57
58 Cooper continued to state that the EDC is now working on the possibility of a local
59 option tax initiative; and they are working with as many committees as they can.

60
61 Commissioner Daly stated that the EDC is tackling a big task. He asked two questions,
62 1) “What do you feel the PC can do to help you achieve your goals?” and
63 2) “What can the EDC do to generate interest in good high paying jobs?”
64

65 Cooper asked if Daly was talking about the restaurant/hotel businesses? Daly replied yes
66 and stated that Essex needs to get past minimum wage businesses. Cooper stated that
67 part of the solution is “to talk to folks like you.” The EDC spoke about visiting other
68 committees and their members. He invited Commission Daly and the PC to attend the
69 next virtual EDC meeting on 1/21/21 @8:00 a.m.
70

71 Owiso Makuku pointed out that the Community Development Departments is a useful
72 tool to the EDC and will also be advisory to them. She reported that she has been
73 pushing for a part-time EDC Coordinator. This position will assist in laying a foundation
74 and to help understand businesses we now have or how to expand them. Owiso reported
75 that she had a conversation with the Town Manager and he understands that Essex needs
76 to “toot its horn and promote Essex.” She noted that the Essex Town Center is evolving
77 as an arts venue, with higher paying jobs, such as Babaroosa, which has a starting salary
78 of \$43,000 per year. Owiso stated that the EDC is about chipping away at the goals.
79

80 Commissioner Alden was confused if the Town includes the Village in its plans. He
81 reminded everyone that the ETC|NEXT plan is a vision that includes a mix of business
82 versus rentals versus housing. The goals are already targeted and useful. He stated that
83 Owiso and Robin Pierce (Village C.D. Director) need to work with the EDC together.
84

85 Cooper stated that the town and village are involved with the EDC. She stated that a joint
86 meeting with the PC and EDC is a great idea.
87

88 • **KATIE BALLARD – HOUSING COMMISSION**
89

90 Katie Ballard stated that she is the Chair for the new Housing Commission that was
91 formed by the Selectboard and the Trustees. The Housing Commission started in
92 October, 2020 and meets 2x/month. The focus right now is on education and getting
93 structurally organized. They are trying to figure out what their role will be going
94 forward. Some topics the Housing Commission suggested included inclusionary
95 zoning, alternate zoning, charges for a housing trust, etc. She stated that they

96 Commission is getting to the point to start to figure out where they are going and how
97 to start partnerships.
98

99 She reported that she had a devastating house fire in 2012 and lost everything. Her
100 family moved to Essex Town for the schools, however that was not a good experience
101 and with the help of programs, her family was able to locate in the Village, where they
102 currently live. Through her experiences, housing is very important to her. She noted
103 that the Housing Commission has lots of knowledge in various aspects of housing
104 which strengthens the group. She stated that they are open to collaboration with the PC
105 and other Boards and/or Committees. She thanked the PC for its time and service.
106

107 **AGENDA ITEM 4: RESIDENTIAL PHASING REPORT**
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109 Darren Schibler walked the PC through the 2020 Residential Phasing Report. He stated that a
110 maximum of 205 Estimated Population Equivalents (EPEs) can be issued per year. An EPE is
111 based on the number of bedrooms. Only 20% of EPE should be outside the sewer core, with the
112 remaining EPEs inside the sewer core. He reported that 2020 had a handful of EPE assigned,
113 however more were assigned to 2021-2023.
114

115 Commissioner Schumacher inquired if the Phasing Report was related to the Planning
116 Commission projects or if it also included building permits. Schiber replied that the numbers
117 reflect projects that were approved for development through the PC, noting that most
118 development lots go through the PC. He noted that the building permit numbers are shown in
119 the Annual Report.
120

121 Village Commissioner Alden thought the Phasing Report looked “anemic.” He noted that we all
122 keep hearing that we need thousands of more dwellings to meet the demand, but what we are
123 currently doing does not seem nearly enough. He said, “We need to do more.”
124

125 Chairman Brusco stated that years before, the measurement of housing was not consistent. The
126 Phasing Report shows that we are not hitting our capacity but will help us as we go forward.
127

128 **AGENDA ITEM 5: MINUTES 12/10/20:**
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130 **Commissioner Daly MOVED and Commissioner Mangan SECONDED a MOTION to**
131 **approve the 12/12/19 minutes as written. The MOTION passed 5-0.**
132

133 **AGENDA ITEMS 6: OTHER BUSINESS:**
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135 Sharon Kelley informed the PC that November 11, 2021 is a scheduled meeting and also a
136 holiday. The PC instructed staff to find a different day to hold the meeting near that date.
137

138 Kelley reported that a petition of T-Mobile regarding replacement of 4 antennas and equipment
139 located on Dave Whitcomb’s premises at 199 & 200 Jericho Road, was submitted to the Public
140 Utility Commission. Kelley noted that the petition had been sent out to the PC for review. There
141 were no concerns with the petition as the Chair noted that this petition bypasses PC review.
142

143 Owiso Makuku reported that the Selectboard decided to come to a Planning Commission
144 meeting to discuss the ETC|NEXT Plan and asked the PC what dates might be convenient for
145 them to discuss. The PC instructed staff to find a meeting night that did not have an application
146 or only had a consent agenda application as they wanted the meeting to be dedicated to the
147 ETC|PLAN.

148
149 Owiso Makuku reported that in years past the PC and the Zoning Board did not have a page in
150 the Annual Town Report. However, she was just informed that this year it is possible. Owiso
151 took the liberty to write something up for the PC as the document was due the next day. She
152 noted that she distributed the draft to the PC by email and asked if they had any comments.
153 She noted that she already received some comments back from Commissioner Mangan.
154 Chairman Brusco stated he would like Owiso to add a note stating Commissioner Furland has
155 returned to the PC and to acknowledge Commissioner John Alden as a Town alternate.
156 Village Commissioner Alden stated that he was disappointed that the other members of the
157 Village PC did not attend the meeting as an invitation was put out to them.

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159 The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

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PLANNING COMMISSION

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By: _____

162

Dustin R. Brusco, Chair

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