

**SOUTH BURLINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
9 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The South Burlington Planning Commission held a regular meeting on Tuesday, 9 September 2020, at 7:00 p.m., via Go to Meeting remote technology

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Louisos, Chair; B. Gagnon, T. Riehle, M. Ostby, M. Mittag, D. MacDonald, P. Engels

ALSO PRESENT: P. Conner, Director of Planning and Zoning; S. Dooley, M. Abrams, D. Long, F. Von Turkovich, C. & A. Long, L. Ravin, V. Bolduc

1. Agenda: Additions, deletions or changes in order of agenda items:

No changes were made to the agenda.

2. Open to the public for items not related to the Agenda:

Mr. Abrams said he has lived on Highland Terrace since 1981 when there were large, long lots. He is concerned with a lot of small houses going in. Trees are being taken down and there are 5 houses that will be on wells. He asked that construction be halted until his proposal is considered. He felt that residents need “predictability.” Ms. Louisos said the Commission will review Mr. Abrams’s letter.

3. Planning Commissioner announcements and staff report:

Ms. Ostby: Hosted a mapping session. Despite low attendance people left with better understanding. She is willing to try it again. She also went through it with Vince Bolduc in light of the housing group he is associated with. The group will probably be back in touch.

Mr. Riehle: The tragic accident on Route 15 got his attention as a biker. Route 15 isn’t too different from Hinesburg or Shelburne Roads, and the Commission should keep this in mind. He didn’t want there to be a day when a child in South Burlington is hit and “we haven’t made it safe for every child.”

Mr. Conner: Construction begins this week on the missing sidewalk in the “jughandle.” Public Works is doing this. Staff is also working on sidewalk connection on Airport Parkway from Kirby Road to Berard Drive and on Dorset Street near Old Cross Road.

4. Work Session on Land Development Regulations Overhaul:

Mr. Conner showed a chart of ‘Recommended Minimum and Maximum Residential Density by PUD Type.’ He noted the number can be moved around. He showed how 4 units per acre with single family homes looks using density as the driver (e.g., the Orchards) and a concept with the same density but with half of the houses being duplexes. The feeling of “neighborhood” is lost in the latter instance. He also showed the same concept at 8 units per acre with 4plexes, and the “oddly matched” look it creates.

Mr. Conner then showed how this changes with “building type” density with at least 3 housing types. NO one type is more than 50% of the building and none is less than 10%. He showed this with different mixes of housing. He noted that the DRB could still look at the context and environment to see what works well. He also said that some of the multiplex buildings could be made to look like single family homes.

Mr. Riehle asked about “common space” in the building type. Mr. Conner said about 10% of the buildable land would be a neighborhood park.

Ms. Ostby questioned whether a 4-plex would have enough land for more cars, more children, etc. She said it felt like there would be less “private space.” Mr. Conner said that is true, but there could be one and two bedroom units. There would also be a requirement for parking accommodation. Ms. Ostby asked if the size of the unit can be defined/controlled. Mr. Conner said that is up to the creativity of the designed. Ms. Ostby felt it makes sense if the number of bedrooms can be limited.

Mr. Macdonald felt this could create a major increase in density, from 16 units to as much as 50. Mr. Conner said this would require a 10-acre minimum parcel. Mr. Mittag asked if it could be a 4-acre parcel. Mr. Conner said that would be for infill, and there would be a relationship to what is next to it. At 10 acres, you can build a neighborhood, and you can adjust the mix of building types.

Ms. Ostby noted that even today you can get the increased density in an R-4 zone with Inclusionary Zoning. She said they would have to figure out the density bonus piece with this type of development.

Mr. Conner then showed an example of what exists on Allen Road. At 4 units per acres, there are two 4-story buildings with a single home between them. Ms. Ostby asked what could have been done differently. Mr. Conner showed where there might have been a street and a park, possible other streets creating a “neighborhood pod” but with the same density as exists today. He added there wouldn’t be a hard cap set on the number of homes, and the number of each type of home could be adjusted to create a desired outcome.

Mr. Conner said staff would still recommend a parcel-based concept in the Conservation PUD.

Mr. VonTurkovich asked whether separate lots would be defined for buildings. Mr. Conner said the classic approach is that you would assign lots to them. He noted that the DRB allows lot lines to be drawn but does not count these for development purposes. He added that developers have said they would like lot lines. Mr. Von Turkovich agreed that the buildings on Allen Road are “unfortunate.” He felt there would be a much different look if they were 2 stories instead of 4.

Ms. Dooley said that having a variety of housing types is more likely to get a differencing in the pricing for housing. She encouraged the Commission to think positively about the “housing type” of development. She felt South Burlington has become a city of 2 districts: the median income in one district is twice that of the other. She said the city needs to address this.

Ms. Ravin asked if the aim is to change the Allen Road type so there will be more buildings with less open space. Mr. Mittag said it is more a matter of how the density is laid out in a parcel. There might be smaller buildings but more of them and still have open space. Ms. Ostby added that what is built would be more efficient. Mr. Conner added that each building would be properly scaled. He also noted that open space today is not necessarily usable or functional.

Mr. Conner suggested people look at South Village where there is a 10-plex where each unit has its own entry door. He also noted that the Kirby Cottages could have been a 7-plex, but that wouldn't have fit in the neighborhood.

Ms. Ostby asked how the building type approach connects with the density bonus for affordable housing. Mr. Conner said Inclusionary Zoning could be expanded or "affordable housing" could be a different "type" of building. There could be a point structure for such things as affordability, energy, etc. Mr. Conner reminded the Commission that the Kirby Cottages are the only non-multi family building development in the city to take advantage of the affordability bonus in the last 15 years.

Ms. Ostby asked if people would have deeded outdoor private space. Mr. Conner said municipalities don't have authority over that. There could be an arrangement where people on the ground floor have land with it. Or there could be a condominium concept. That would be up to the developer. Ms. Ostby felt that every residential unit built should have guaranteed private outdoor space. Mr. Mittag felt outdoor space can be shared, not necessarily private.

Members then returned to consider the chart of staff recommendations.

Mr. Riehle asked about allowing the total parcel density on the 30% buildable area in a Conservation PUD. Mr. Conner said allowing that density would forestall the concern of a "taking." Mr. Riehle said units would really have to be packed in. Mr. Conner said there could be a limit on the largest building that could be built (e.g., a 4-plex).

Mr. Conner suggested having the City Attorney come in and discuss the "taking" issue. Members felt this would be a good idea.

Mr. Gagnon felt that density should be encouraged in transportation routes with more multi-plexes. Further out, you might have more single family homes. Mr. Conner said you could also look at the relationships to what is next door to the development. You could wind up with a "transitional" lot.

Ms. Ostby said single family homes are expensive. That's what drives division in the community. She felt diverse housing should always be encouraged and noted that multi-family buildings can look beautiful. She didn't feel the mindset should be toward a preference for single-family homes. Ms. Ravin noted that Burlington is encouraging adding a unit onto a single family home. She noted that if you put more expensive housing further out, you are adding to the rich/poor separation.

Ms. Dooley said that people at median income can afford a car, so housing doesn't have to be on a transit route.

Mr. Conner said he would like feedback as to whether the “building approach” is the right way to go. Mr. Gagnon said he looked the overall approach. Ms. Ostby was concerned that density be maximized appropriately. Mr. Macdonald wanted to see more detail (e.g. percentages). Mr. Conner said what the Commission decides on percentages is up to them.

Ms. Ravin said the building type approach would be easier to understand if she knew the goals of the Planning Commission. She added that land owners will want to know whether they will be getting more with that approach. She felt part of the problem is that what the Commission wants is “beautiful buildings, not ugly ones.” She said if you want creativity, you should give builders choices, not minimums and maximums.

Ms. Ostby said she hoped they can clearly articulate the goal. She noted that the community has thought that R-4 was R-4, but, there are density bonuses that change that. The building type approach may be a way to make that clearer.

Ms. Louisos said she thought Commissioners were in general agreement that a “building approach” to maximum density in PUDs other than Conservation PUDs, and a “parcel approach” to conservation PUDs as recommended by staff. Commissioners concurred.

5. Summary and priority of related work:

Mr. Conner said the first priority is Interim Zoning. Another is the Shearer request. He suggested having sub-groups to work on some things. He showed a chart with PUD projects, City Center/Form Based Code projects, and stand-alone projects and asked members to think about these. Ms. Ostby noted there may be some pockets in the city that could be considered for rezoning.

6. Consider possible application for 2022 Municipal Planning Grant:

Mr. Conner felt the Commission has enough on its plate not to be chasing after another grant, and he recommended not applying this year. Members agreed.

7. Naming of Road:

Mr. Conner noted that staff is recommending the second option (Medalist Drive) instead of Clubhouse Drive. Mr. Riehle moved to approve Medalist Drive. Mr. Gagnon seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

8. Meeting Minutes of 25 August 2020:

The approval of the Minutes was postponed until the next meeting.

9. Other Business:

Mr. Conner noted that the City of Burlington is rewarning its public hearing.

As there was no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned by common consent at 9:25 p.m.

Minutes Approved by the Planning Commission October 27, 2020