

NEWPORT CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
September 1st, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Elliott, Clark Curtis, Dan Ross, and Woodman Page

OTHERS PRESENT: Mayor Paul Monette, Bob Currier, Ruth Sproull, Pam Ladds, Anne Page, Jeff Fellingner, Diana Henry, Nancy Rae, Graham Rae, Holly White and Wahib Yared, and Leslie Becker

7:00 p.m. Chair Charles Elliott called the meeting to order. Clark Curtis moved to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2015 meeting. This was seconded by Woodman Page. **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.**

7:02 p.m. Clark Curtis moved that the Vermont Urban & Community Forest Program be placed next in the agenda's order. This was seconded by Woodman Page. **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.**

7:03 p.m. Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program. Mr. Jeff Fellingner from the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program provided a brief introduction of himself to the Planning Commission. Mr. Fellingner began his presentation by describing the state program as funded by the USDA Forest Service and run in cooperation with UVM's Extension Service. The program has three specific goals: inventory all public-city managed trees; assist city staff to develop a management plan for the city's trees; and finally provide city staff training in basic tree care. Mr. Fellingner was joined by his colleague Elise Schadler by telephone in which she stated that should the City of Newport agree to the program that it would begin in the spring of 2016. The current program is currently working with 20 communities throughout the state and has contracted with an arborist to provide hands on training for tree plantings, care and removal. Ultimately the program's goal is to better manage community trees. Charles Elliott advised Mr. Fellingner and Ms Schadler that they should provide their presentation to the Newport City Council for approval. Dan Ross stated that the city has a number of White Pine Trees that could be better managed. Charles Elliott stated that the program would assist city personnel with the resources and expertise to manage the city's trees. Mayor Monette also listed city personnel who might ultimately be involved with the program. Plans were made for a presentation to be made to the City Council sometime in the near future.

7:25 p.m. Planning Commission Vacancy. Clark Curtis moved for the commission to go into executive session for the purposes of interviewing Bob Currier and Ruth Sproull for the vacancy within the Planning Commission. This was seconded by Woodman Page. **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.**

8:02 p.m. Planning Commission Vacancy. Chair Elliott called the meeting to order from executive session. Dan Ross then requested that the Newport Planning Commission recommend to the City Council that Mr. Bob Currier be appointed to the Planning Commission. This was seconded by Woodman Page. **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS**

DECISION. Chair Elliott thanked Ruth Sproull for her time and interest in the vacancy. Mayor Monette stated that he would have the item placed on the agenda of the City Council at their next meeting on September 14, 2015.

8:08 p.m. Update on Zoning Bylaw changes. Charles Elliott provided an update on the proposed changes to the zoning bylaws. The most significant item was the number of fowl that could be kept within an individual owner's property. Chair Elliott has fielded a number of complaints on the subject and has been in contact with the city lawyer. Research continues on the topic, but the average limit for kept fowl is six throughout our nation's cities. It was also briefed that South Burlington has an ordinance limiting the number of fowl to six along with specific permit requirements to include fees. Dan Ross stated that Newport was not South Burlington and that he would be interested in the number of written complaints. It was stated that there were three individuals who had their gardens destroyed. Dan Ross stated that the destruction of gardens could be anything from raccoons to deer. Pam Ladds wondered why all this effort was being placed on this issue when the city had much more pressing issues with speeding. Diana Henry felt that the issue was beyond the city's authority and that it rested with the Vermont Department of Agriculture. Holly White asked if there might be information related to the space requirements per an individual chicken. Mayor Monette felt that the issue would be best served by the zoning administrator to deal with rather than the city's police officers. Clark Curtis informed everyone that the current number for chickens to be kept in Newport was zero and that Charlie Elliott was trying to improve the situation and be proactive. Dan Ross mentioned another concern related to Bird Flu. On a different topic related to the commission vacancy, Diana Henry voiced her concern of not receiving a response to an email that she had sent out. Ms Henry continue with her opinion that the number of fowl should not be covered by a zoning bylaw. Charles Elliott explained that the issue was within the purview of the city and the State Agriculture was responsible for larger farm operations. Clark Curtis provided a copy of the South Burlington ordinance and stated that all of the questions presented were answered in the pamphlet. Charles Elliott moved the discussion to the other proposed changes to the bylaw. Work continues on the proper descriptions for outdoor signs on the prohibition of adult signs, and junk yards. Dan Ross mentioned how the city does have a junk yard on Crawford Road. Clark Curtis stated that that site would be grandfathered and was a business with a state license. Charles Elliott closed further discussion by stating that few individuals would disagree with him on the definition of a junk yard at an individual property owner.

8:52 p.m. NEXT MEETING: The next meeting date will be on September 15. One final question was raised on how the commission meetings were announced. Charlie Elliott stated that each public meeting has an announcement placed in the local paper, the city web site, at the municipal building, post office and also the library. It was also suggested that an announcement also be included in the Front Porch Forum which Charles Elliott stated that he would look into.

8:54 p.m. Clark Curtis made a motion to adjourn. This was seconded by Woodman Page. **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.**

Minutes taken and transcribed by Woodman Page

Approved: Charles Elliott Date: 7/16/2015