

NEWPORT CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

September 15th, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Elliott, Robert Currier, Clark Curtis, and Woodman Page

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dan Ross

OTHERS PRESENT: Daily Express Reporter Chris Roy, Pam Ladds, Diane Peel, Pam Rugh and Thomas Farrow

7:02 p.m. Chair Charles Elliott called the meeting to order. Clark Curtis moved to approve the minutes of the September 1st meeting. This was seconded by Bob Currier.
APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.

7:03 p.m. Update Status on the Vermont Urban & Community Forest Program: Chair Elliott began the meeting by stating that the VT Urban & Community Forest Program was temporally on hold. The Planning Commission had received a report from the members of the program at the September 1st meeting. The Forest Program personnel were advised to present their briefing to the City Council. Eventually the city will be coordinating with the program.

7:04 p.m. Proposed Changes to the Zoning Bylaw on Animals: Chair Elliott stated that he is currently waiting for the city attorney to provide comments on this as well as other issues. Charles Elliott added that there was nothing new from the previous meetings, but added that to be considered a standard agricultural practice the business must produce a minimum annual income of \$1000. Anything below this amount falls under city control and regulations. Clark Curtis inquired on square footage per individual chickens which Chair Elliott did not have any further information on the topic other than what he had just stated. The only further comment was that the City Council is concerned with the issue and supports a regulation for keeping chickens.

7:08 p.m. Proposed Changes to Shoreland Control District: It was originally intended to be just a statement in the City of Newport's Bylaw that stated that anything on the shoreline had to comply with state regulations. However, in Newport's current bylaw there is a statement where there can not be any buildings built within so many feet of the shoreline. Chair Elliott is going to review state regulations and ensure that Newport's bylaws agree with all state regulations. Pam Ladds asked if this was in relation to recent state legislation that had been enacted and written largely by State Representative John Rogers. Pam Ladds also added that it was very clear on the guidelines of what could be built on shoreland property. At this point, Tom Farrow inquired on the previous topic of the annual income limit of \$1000 and how this amount had been determined. Mr. Farrow also questioned why any of these regulations were necessary and how this was hurting families. Charles Elliott stated that it was due to a state regulation which presumably came from the Agricultural Department. Bob Currier also added that it didn't necessarily only apply to chickens but could also be connected to

the amount of vegetables that are raised and sold. Diane Peel asked if there would be a limit of six chickens in the city. Charles Elliott stated that most of the bylaws that he has reviewed show that the standard is six. Pam Ladds responded by stating that the number was arbitrary and did not take family dynamics into consideration. It was explained that chickens lay for a short period of time during their life so that families may want to obtain more chickens. An example of a family with five children with a total of six chickens would not be enough to sustain that family. Charles Elliott pointed out that the city bylaw currently states that one can not have chickens or any other agricultural animals on anything less than three acres. Chair Elliott is trying to come up with something that will work for the community. Pam Ladds added that having fencing and adequate shelter for chickens is proper, but again questioned the limits on the number of chickens that one can have on their property. Clark Curtis stated it was one of the reasons why he had inquired on the square footage requirements. It was also pointed out that the two complaints that originally raised the issue has been resolved by one family moving from the area while the other family had given up raising chickens. Charles Elliott added that there would be additional provisions included within the bylaw related to other animals to include goats and probably rabbits. Clark Curtis stated that the proposal was not going to be quickly resolved and that ordinances from Essex, South Burlington and other areas were being reviewed. Pam Ladds provided the website address of the Northeast Organic Farming Association (www.NOFA.org) which may be helpful with the commission's writing new bylaws on the specific needs for chickens.

7:28 p.m. Other Business: Robert Currier pointed out an issue raised at the September 14th, City Council Meeting. Someone had stated that the City Municipal Plan was outdated. Pam Ladds informed the commission that the web site with the municipal plan was outdated and did not reflect the current hard copy of the plan. Charles Elliott stated that he would look into the issue. Clark Curtis asked if there was anything from Derby related to the proposed rezoning of Prouty Drive. Charles Elliott had not received any correspondence on the topic and had no problems with the proposal since the area on Prouty Drive was being used commercially. Pam Rugih asked about property assessments and wondered if the assessor would take into account other properties on her street since many were run down and in disrepair. Charles Elliott assured Pam Rugih that the assessor would take all this information into account. An example of a property on the Bluff Road was given where the building was appraised at \$50,000 and the land which had a small shoreland area was appraised at around \$200,000. Again, it was stated by Charles Elliott that the assessors would look at everything when it came time to assess individual property values.

7:40 p.m Next Meeting: The next meeting date will be October 6th at 7p.m.

7:41 p.m. Robert Currier made a motion to adjourn. This was seconded by Clark Curtis.
APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.

Minutes taken and transcribed by Woodman Page

Approved:  Date: 10-26-2015