

NEWPORT CITY PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING MINUTES
DECEMBER 23, 2014

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Beth Barnes, Jennifer Woolard, Colleen Moore de Ortiz, Stan Chop, Paul Dreher, John Ward

7:05 p.m. Chair Charles Elliott called the hearing to order. Mr. Elliott described the hearing's purpose, city plan, and the hearing process, and read the hearing notice. The Commission is looking for input from interested parties on the proposed draft city plan.

Jennifer Woolard introduced herself; she is the Prevention Specialist in the Newport Office of the VT Dept. of Health. She recommended some additions regarding health-related programs in the community that she and others in the field would like to see captured. First, Safe Routes to School is a national program that brings in traffic engineers to look at communities and streets surrounding schools to better design them to encourage children to walk to school. Newport City Elementary has recently begun participating in the program. The school has had four walking school buses this far in the school year, and plans to continue them monthly. Council members and other community leaders including doctors and pediatricians from the local hospital have participated in the walks. Paul Dreher noted that if this program was noted in the plan, it may open the door to future grants, and aligns with recommendations from NVDA reports and others.

Ms. Woolard also noted that bike racks are currently mentioned in the plan, but could be incorporated into another section. She also mentioned anonymous, permanent take-back drop boxes for prescription drugs that are being placed in the city and asked that they be incorporated into wording. Ms. Woolard also brought up the AARP Age-Friendly City Designation that Newport City has recently received and is participating in; it is currently mentioned in the Housing section, but since the designation incorporates 8 domains, it could be mentioned elsewhere as well. It could be mentioned in one of the beginning sections, or could have its own appendix. This also has the potential for funding for the city in various aspects in the future. Ms. Woolard also noted other community programs that, while she doesn't represent them, they are important public health programs in the community. Some of these include Cornucopia, Green Mountain Farm to School, NEKCA, and Umbrella.

Paul Dreher also asked for additions to the section on the HealthWorks ONE Coalition; he had emailed the wording to the Commission prior to the meeting.

Woodman Page asked Ms. Woolard and others about Complete Streets guidelines. Ms. Woolard answered that the guidelines are both Federal and State, and transportation agencies and cities are mandated in law to consider all modes of transportation. Mr. Page

then asked just how much money is available in some of the grants that had been mentioned. Mr. Dreher responded that some of the transportation grants from the EPA, CDC, and other agencies could be in the hundreds of thousands for projects, though many grants may be smaller. John Ward cautioned the group that while grants often seem like "free" money, the cost of maintenance for implementation of projects must be considered.

The city plan is also reviewed by NVDA; Mr. Elliott received their comments on a standard from at close of business Tuesday. The Flood Resilience section appears to have raised the most concerns, so the Commission will need to work on wording to strengthen the section. Overall the review was positive, however.

The plan is also posted on the city website for review. Once these changes are made, the version on the website will be updated before being moved to Council, and throughout their hearing process.

Jennifer Woolard asked about the timeline; Mr. Elliott is hoping to have a draft ready for City Council within 30 days. Much of the changes are for incorporating language, not large changes.

Stan Chop asked how the Commission might go about "fixing" the flood resilience section. The Commission will work on the language, and will also ask various agencies and organizations to help, including emergency preparedness team, police, NVDA, FEMA, etc. Mr. Chop asked if the watershed protection language was included; it is mostly summaries of other organizations' work.

Mr. Page asked Ms. Woolard if the city does indeed have kayak racks; the answer is yes. They are available for seasonal rental at Prouty Beach and at the Gateway.

Ms. de Ortiz asked about the inclusion of the waterfront hotel in the long-term vision, since the plans seem to have fallen through. Mr. Elliott replied that yes, he will keep it in because he believes that it will happen at some point. It may not be Jay Peak or Bill Stenger who bring it to pass or in the same timeline, but he believes a project similar to that will happen at some point. Ms. de Ortiz asked for an update on the downtown block; Mr. Ward replied that they are working on asbestos abatement now and will soon start lead abatement. If things go well, he estimates demolition will begin in March or April.

7:53 p.m. Chair Charles Elliott closed the hearing.

Minutes taken and transcribed by Jennifer Leithead.

Approved: Charles A. Elliott Date: January 6, 2015