

NEWPORT CITY PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

December 4th, 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Clark Curtis, Vice Chair Robert Currier, Woodman Page and Coleen Moore-Ortiz.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Zoning Administrator (ZA) Charles Elliott and Ruth Sproull.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mayor Paul Monette, Council Member Julie Raboin, Robert Guyer, Pam Ladds, and Anne Page.

7:03 p.m. Review Notice of Public Hearing and the Proposed Zoning and Subdivision Bylaw Amendments: Chair Clark Curtis called the Public Hearing to order and began by stating that the hearing had been properly publicized for public dissemination. The Planning Commission meeting that was supposed to be held immediately following the public hearing had not been warned at all. ZA Elliott had simply forgotten to warn the meeting. Each member of the public present was provided copies of the Newport City's proposal to add four amendments to the City's current Zoning and Subdivision Bylaw. Chair Curtis also saw fit to read aloud the entire Notice of Public Hearing along with each individual amendment and called for public comment from those in attendance. The first amendment was a change to the zoning at Lakemont Industrial Park from Light Industrial to Public Health/Office District. Mr. Robert Guyer had concerns for his place of work on whether this would have an effect on the current or future work performed there and should the business be sold if the present work could continue there. Chair Curtis and others on the Planning Commission assured Mr. Guyer that the proposed amendment would not hinder what work was currently being performed and that even if the business was sold that the work would continue since the business of manufacturing would be grandfathered for its current use along with other similar types of manufacturing. Chair Curtis provided an example where the exemption would not be allowed for a business such as COSTCO moving into the facility whereas a welding shop would fit the previous existing circumstances. Mr. Guyer was advised that he and his company would be kept informed of the process and that ZA Elliott would write a letter stating the exemption from the proposed amendment. An additional question of whether sewer lines had been placed in the Lakemont area which it was confirmed that they had been. It was also confirmed by Chair Curtis that at least one resident of Lakemont was in favor of the change in zoning.

7:22 p.m. Review Proposed Amendment that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Requires an Update to Zoning Bylaw Flood Plain Regulations: Chair Curtis again read verbatim the second proposed bylaw which is required by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to bring the Zoning Bylaw up to date and be in compliance with those of the NFIP. Additional written comments from Alison Low from the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) and Sacha Pealer from Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation were read aloud which provided inputs and deletions for the proposed bylaw along with the comment that the changes would not lower home owners insurance but would not cause them to raise either. This update essentially ensures continued enrollment in the NFIP.

7:25 p.m. Review Proposed Amendment for Residential Short – Term Rental Business:

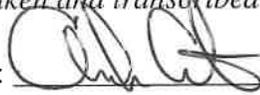
Chair Curtis stated that the ZA will now be able to track Airbnb rentals through a permitting process to ensure that these units remain safe and in compliance with the city's parking regulations. Pam Ladds added that there was a concern where speculators could be hurting the local housing market by only offering housing for short-term rather than long term rentals. It was also pointed out that there are some who rent out their residences to large groups that create noise and at times chaos in residential neighborhoods which this amendment is designed to prevent. Mayor Monette and Council Member Raboin had some concerns that the amendment might restrict the free market of local entrepreneurs which Chair Curtis assured them that this was not the case. Ultimately this amendment would allow fairer competition between Airbnbs and those legitimate businesses that must register and license themselves through the state. This amendment requires that the owner must reside in the establishment that is being rented out through Airbnb rentals. Again, Chair Curtis read the entire amendment as well as the written comments from Alison Low of the NVDA.

7:55 p.m. Review Proposed Amendment for Eliminating 5th Paragraph of Certificate of Occupancy Requirement:

Chair Curtis provided a brief history of how the Certificate of Occupancy had come about where initially the City of Newport was not receiving proper notification for billing of properties when occupied and thus losing out on charges related to the use of resources related to water and sewer. In addition, the State of Vermont required that new construction must meet certain energy standards prior to issuing a Certificate of Occupancy and that for individuals to receive loans for businesses that banks now required Certificates of Occupancy. It was determined that this latest amendment caused more problems than it solved and therefore it is being eliminated. Here again, Chair Curtis read the entire report for elimination as well as Alison Low (NVDA) written comments.

8:16 p.m. Close Public Hearing: Additional comments related to the proposed amendments were called for and with no further discussions. Chair Curtis entertained a motion to close the Public Hearing which Vice Chair Robert Currier moved and this was seconded by Colleen Moore-Ortiz. **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS DECISION.** Chair Curtis stated that the Planning Commission's next meeting would be December 11th and the 18th.

Minutes taken and transcribed by Woodman Page

Approved:  Date: 12-11-18