Planning Commission Minutes
City of Newport
Tuesday, January 18, 2022

Members Present:

Denis Chenette, Vice-Chair, Acting Chair
Amanda (Mandy) Chaput, Secretary
Carole O'Connell

Guests:

Alison Lowe, NVDA
Laura Dolgin, City Manager

Not Present:

John Monette, Chair
Kevin Mead

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by Mr. Chenette at 6:22pm
2. **Approval of Minutes.** Motion to approve the minutes of January 4, 2022, made by Ms. O'Connell, seconded by Ms. Chaput, and the motion passed.
3. **Public Comment:** None
4. **City Development Plan:** Edits from the Vitality section were reviewed from the last meeting. The inclusion of completed Main St. projects such as the improved crosswalks, the bump outs and sidewalks were emphasized. The role of arts and culture was provided to Jennifer Hopkins, MAC Board Member, for review and input. She indicated she will share it with the MAC Board. To date, we have not received a response, but it is safe to move forward in posting this section on the website.

   Regional Connectivity is the next section to review and discuss. This may need a bit more time to review as it is comprehensive. Connectivity involves transportation, energy, a reference to the Climate Action Plan, equity, and inclusion. Finding ways to reduce greenhouse gasses is a key element. Advocacy of improved rail services for passenger and freight is another consideration, as is fuel costs. The Climate Action plan requires VTrans to develop a sustainable transportation plan and metrics for cost effectiveness, and service gaps need to be identified. Inviting Rural Community Transport to join us at a future meeting will be worthwhile.

   This area has a high share of energy burden. Percentage of income spent on energy for heating and gasoline are major cost drivers. 11% of income is the standard set by Efficiency Vermont, but the NEK is at 14% due in part to the # of older homes. When the % goes above 11%, it begins to cut into other needs such as food. Inviting Ann Lawless, from the 'Heat Squad' to join us at a future meeting will be worthwhile, so that we can learn about energy issues and impacts and services from this vantage point.

5. **Old Business**: interviews have been conducted for the open position of Zoning Administrator and it is hoped the council will be able to make an appointment at one of the next council meetings. The city is planning to hold another Remote Community update in June. Chair Monette has represented the planning commission at the last 2 updates, and this next one will be a good opportunity to unveil the work on the Municipal Plan.
   Ms. Lowe reached out to the person who had made comments regarding housing.
   John Monette, Alison Lowe, and Laura Dolgin participated in a brief remote meeting with the North Country Hospital representatives, and they are not quite ready to go live with their expansion plans as they are still working out some details. They do appreciate the ability to work with us on the health care section of the plan. We will continue to keep them informed of this section of the plan so that we are in alignment with capacity.
6. **New Business:** Procurement for Bylaw Modernization Grant will require 3 bid postings, or requests for qualifications, to be solicited. Ms. Lowe will assist Laura Dolgin in distributing the RFQ's, and they will be placed on industry websites such as Think Vermont, Vermont Planners Association, and SEC group will be contacted directly. We want to move this portion swiftly as the grant has a 2-year timeline for completion by January 31, 2024.

Ice Skating is going great...still attempting to build ice sculpture. Winter Fest is at the end of February. Momentum is building to engage area businesses....175 new residents in Newport is increasing positivity.

7. **Set a draft agenda:** the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, at 6:00pm. Agenda will be like the agenda for tonight. Ms. Lowe will reach out to RCT for the next meeting and Heat Squad for the February 15, meeting.
8. **Adjourn.** Motion made to adjourn by Ms. O'Connell and seconded by Ms. Chaput. Meeting adjourned at 7:21pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Amanda (Mandy) Chaput, Secretary
Unofficial Until Approved

Approved this 1st day of February, 2022

Chair, City of Newport Planning Commission