

APPROVED MINUTES
MAIDSTONE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Wednesday, October 4, 2023, 7:00 pm
Held by Zoom Video Conference

Members present (via Zoom): Bruce Barker, Bob Champagne-Willis, Chris von Alt

Other members of Town Government present (via Zoom): Town Clerk and Lister Amy Pear; Administrative Assistant to the Zoning Board, Planning Commission, and Selectboard Mary von Alt

Also present (via Zoom): Jesse Noone of Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)

At 7:00 pm, the meeting was called to order by Chris von Alt, Chairman. Chris welcomed Jesse Noone of NVDA, our regional planning commission.

APPROVE 2023-08-24 MINUTES:

Bob made a motion to accept the minutes as presented for the 2023-08-24 Planning Commission Meeting; Bruce seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

CONTINUE TO WORK ON REVISING THE TOWN PLAN, DISCUSSING AND ACTING UPON AS NECESSARY:

Jesse Noone of NVDA attended the meeting instead of Alison Low, who had a scheduling conflict. Jesse Noone very recently worked with the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) Committee to develop Maidstone's newly adopted LHMP.

The meeting began with a discussion of Vermont's FY24 Municipal Planning Grant, through which individual communities may apply for up to \$30,000 for "local planning initiatives that support statewide planning goals" (<https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>). Chris shared his screen to display information about the grant. The discussion included but was not limited to the following:

- Maidstone did not receive confirmation of our municipal planning process from our Regional Planning Commission (RPC), which is NVDA, by the deadline of September 30th. Jesse said he will look into this to find out if the planning process the Town went through for the LHMP can be backdated and recognized as fulfilling this requirement, and if the Town is eligible to apply for the grant.
- The Municipal Planning Grant requires that the Town provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes or that the municipality has voted at an annual or special meeting to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes. Bob said that Maidstone has a Planning and Zoning Fund that was established some years ago, which fulfills this requirement. At this time, he reported that the Fund has \$4,839.21 in it. It was decided to ask the Selectboard to authorize use of the Planning and Zoning fund to advance the process for creating a new Town Plan.
- How likely it is that Maidstone will receive this grant was questioned. Bob said that in his experience thus far, Vermont's scoring criteria for awarding municipal grants tends to ignore Essex County and, in some instances, Maidstone in particular. Chris pointed out that the Program Description clearly states that "Projects related to recovery from the Vermont Flood of 2023" have priority. Jesse did not have any further information about that, but expressed his opinion that this grant should not be used for that purpose.
- Chris said that he thinks the Town should apply for the grant even if it is not likely that it will be awarded to Maidstone; he feels applying for this grant will put the Town in a better position for success with future grants. Bob and Bruce agreed that we should proceed with this grant application.
- Jesse spoke of various ways that he can help the Town with the grant application as a consultant from NVDA. Various issues for which grant funding might be sought were briefly talked about, such as flood hazard regulations, and housing-related policies to comply with the recently passed Act 47, Vermont Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME). He feels that Maidstone's needs definitely fit with this grant.

Continuing to share his screen, Chris displayed a list of Recommended Actions for the Planning Commission to take, which the Commission then discussed. Most of these Recommended Actions concern the Town Survey that will provide public input into the new Town Plan: how to make the survey available, how to create it, how to announce it, the number of questions that should be included, and the budget needed to print and mail surveys. It was decided to use Google Forms for the survey and to try to keep the number of questions to about 20. Printing can be done at Town Hall, Bob said. A multi-pronged approach to survey distribution will be used, mailing a copy of the Survey to all residents and property owners and including an envelope, emailing a link to the survey to everyone on Amy's Email Blast setup, posting a link to the survey on the Town website, and having paper copies available at Town Hall. Amy will look into making labels from the LHMP distribution list. Announcements will be placed in the Front Porch Forum, posted on the Sandwich Board at Town Hall and in newspapers as possible, emailed, and included on the Town website. The Town's Planning and Zoning Fund is a possible source of funding this operation.

The issue of what questions to include was raised. Jesse suggested including questions about housing, such as seasonally vacant housing; how much housing has been built in the last 20 years and where; the needs to address for year-round housing such as water, wastewater, and essential services; and why people have chosen to live year-round on the Lake. He said questions about what people like and do not like are helpful. He then cited Brownington where many people said they no longer knew their neighbors; re-engaging people in the community, thereby building community capacity, became a strong focus of the Brownington Town Plan.

A number of survey questions have already been suggested by Commission members, plus the 2006 Town Survey is available as another possible source. The Commission decided to have the survey questions completed at the next meeting, which was decided to be scheduled on Thursday, October 19, 2023.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Jesse will find out this week whether or not Maidstone is eligible to submit a Municipal Planning Grant application, and will inform the Planning Commission. If the Town is eligible, Jesse will plan to work with the Commission on completing that application.
- In preparation for applying for the grant, a line item will be added to the Selectboard Agenda for the meeting scheduled for Monday, October 9, 2023, stating, "Request from the Planning Commission that the Selectboard authorize use of the Planning and Zoning fund to advance the process for creating a new Town Plan."
- Mary will put together a document listing all survey questions suggested thus far and send it to the Commission members as soon as possible; the members will review the questions, record their approval or disapproval of the inclusion of each question, and add questions if they wish. That review of survey questions is due back to Mary by Tuesday, October 17th, so that she can prepare a complete list of questions for the Commission to review and decide upon at the Thursday, October 19th meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

There was no other business.

SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING:

The Commission decided to meet next on Thursday, October 19, 2023, at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

ADJOURN:

The business of the meeting having been concluded, Bob made a motion to adjourn; Bruce seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary von Alt