

MINUTES
MAIDSTONE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, September 10, 2024, 7:00 pm
Hybrid Meeting, both in person at Town Hall and by Zoom Video

Members present in person: Bruce Barker, chair; Ex-officio members Scott Lovell, Bruno McKenzie, Brad McVetty

Members present via Zoom: Bob Champagne-Willis; Paul Kamins; Ray Lovell

Also present via Zoom: Amy Pear, Linwood Mixer, Kyle Dwyer of Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)

At 7:01 pm, the meeting was called to order by Bruce Barker.

Bruce reminded all of the rules of participation.

APPROVE MINUTES:

Bob made a motion to accept the minutes as presented for August 8, 2024; Paul seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

NVDA Update:

Kyle updated the Commission on his activities since the last meeting, including a tour of Maidstone with Bob. He then discussed his work on housing, starting with the housing elements from the previous town plan and added updated data. He will work with the survey data and tonight's discussion to put together the draft housing element of the new plan.

REQUIRED ELEMENT: HOUSING

Bruce shared his screen, showing his findings on housing in Maidstone including surrounding towns. He showed the high number of vacant / seasonal housing units in the town. He reviewed the survey results, showing that increasing affordable housing in Maidstone was not a high priority of the respondents. Kyle felt that this was a point that we should include in the Town Plan. Bob mentioned the discussions that he is hearing about affordability, factoring in the level of taxes.

The Commission seeks clarity about the impact of the Housing Act on Maidstone, specifically about duplexes and accessory dwelling units.

After Bruce finished sharing his findings, Paul shared his screen. He discussed the state's housing shortage and affordable housing. Since the legislation focusses on the downtown centers, most of the emphasis does not relate to Maidstone. He focused on what NVDA can do to interpret state law and help us make sure that our Town Plan incorporates the directives of the state.

Paul also shared his concerns about the survey and how the results were weighed. Kyle emphasized the importance of the comments in the survey and the necessity for public engagement. Raymond brought up the idea of opening up the survey again. Amy shared the efforts that were extended to have the maximum participation from the town.

Ex-officio members Scott Lovell and Bruno McKenzie left the meeting around this time.

Kyle wanted to know if the Commission wanted to include a comment on short term rentals (STR). Bob felt that as STRs are increasing in the town, and that this should be addressed. His concerns were two-fold. He feels that STRs bring in people who may not understand or appreciate Maidstone's rural character. He also explained that part of the funding for education includes income from taxing STRs. If there are STRs that are done under the radar, then the tax income does not help offset the revenue into the education system, and we all pay higher education taxes.

Kyle's goal is to flesh out the highlights of this meeting and share a summary of the housing element with the Commission by Friday.

(Bob's connection to the meeting was lost at this time. He joined Amy for the rest of the meeting.)

Kyle asked about the 2016 Town Plan's inclusion of concern over the increase of full-time residents at the lake. He didn't know why this was included and wondered if it should still be part of the plan. Amy mentioned that there are several versions of the 2016 Town Plan at Town Hall as the plan was formulated. These are available if anyone wants to review them.

Paul expressed his concern about the state's direction on energy and thinks that the Commission needs to address this as a whole.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no additional public comments.

OTHER BUSINESS:

There was no other business.

SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING:

Due to Bruce's October schedule, we need to move the meeting to the beginning of the month. We set the next meeting to be Thursday, October 3 at 7 pm.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT MEETING:

Bruce will look at the Adjacent Communities Element.

Paul will look at Economic Development.

Bob will continue on Energy.

Bob made a motion to adjourn. Paul seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Champagne-Willis