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PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
November 5, 2026

Present: Jamie Dayton, DRB/PC chair ; Gretchen Bailey, DRB/PC vice-chair; Logan Roth-Longe; Dennis Mueller; Sharon Ashcraft, Kathy Kennett
Others present: Danelle Birong, Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC); Jolyon Larson, ACRPC, Donna Oliver, Assistant Town Clerk, scribe

1. Jamie called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. a. Logan made a motion to approve the PC portion of the minutes of October 8th. Seconded by Dennis. Kathy, Sharon and Danelle said they had corrections. Kathy noted that in #4, the word "union" should be added so it reads: "Vergennes Union Middlebury and High School". Sharon said that in #11, instead of the sentence "We should leave it in the new plan", it should say that we "Discussed whether to include it in the new plan". Danelle thought the language in the second sentence of #8 could be clearer. We should add 'the' before alternatives, so the sentence reads, "Sharon suggested using the word 'preservation' instead of the alternatives."

   b. Gretchen made a motion to accept the PC section of the minutes of October 8th as amended; Logan seconded. ALL IN FAVOR

   c. Logan made a motion to accept the PC minutes of October 22nd; Gretchen seconded. Sharon, Danelle and Logan had suggestions for changes. Sharon said that in 3.f. we should remove the sentence "We need to be cautious about how this is presented", and insert "Sharon said her intent was to contact all landowners but had not yet done so." Logan said that 3.g. needs to be clarified. We didn't approve sites #1, 9, 6 and 7; but #1, and 9 and either #6 and #7 merged or #8. The sentence should read "The PC agreed that the top preferred locations were sites #1 and 9, and either #6 and 7 (being merged), or #8." Danelle said that in 3.j. the word 'not' should be added after the word 'should'. Kathy said that permits aren't really an important data point that should be included in the Town Plan.

   d. Gretchen made a motion to accept the PC portion of the October 22nd minutes as amended; Logan seconded. ALL IN FAVOR.

3. a. The PC then discussed the plan to try to replace the Enhanced Energy Plan in the current Town Plan with the version we are working on right now. Jolyon thinks the plan is almost final. There must be public meetings for both the PC and Selectboard. Both boards must approve the new plan. There also needs to be a public announcement. Jamie hopes that we would have an amendment ready by mid-January. The major difference is in the preferred locations and size of the available land. We want to avoid having companies believe they

have approval to build a solar field in Panton. Kathy voiced opposition to this plan, saying that its poor timing. She said that the public will not be interested as the holidays are coming up. Dennis was concerned that this will not be a significant enough change to make it worth the extra work. Sharon then read the section of the last Town Plan (Appendix 2, pg. 119) that would be changed. It specifically states 'preferred areas being composed of approximately 300 acres in the central portion of Panton on both sides of Slang Road in the area east of Dead Creek and south and west of Holcomb Slang, north of West Road.' The effect wold be to remove the understanding we had 300 acres available for development. Jolyon also pointed out that having preferred areas has a better standing with the PUC. And we do need to specify an acreage.

b. Logan called for a vote to amend the current plan; Gretchen seconded. ALL IN FAVOR. The vote was held with 4 in favor and 2 opposed.
c. Jolyon took comments on the latest version of the plan. He thinks this is nearly final. The two primary changes are the updates on the preferred location with map changes and analysis to illustrate avoidance of habitat disturbance which is part of the grant requirements. Jamie encouraged the Commission to try to finalize the plan as soon as possible so he can share it with the town's counsel. We don't want to be vulnerable.
d. Kathy pointed out that the facility decommissioning language is only attributed to the large scale project in the Scale-based Expectations section and not for the small or medium sized projects. Dennis agreed. Decommissioning should be required for all sized projects. Jolyon pointed to the section on Decommissioning and Restoration on the previous page (p. 29 in the draft). Sharon also suggested soil testing be required before installation and after decommissioning. A question was also raised about decommissioning being considered since panels can be replaced.
e. Jolyon raised the issue of habitat block avoidance (table on page 46). He said there is plenty of space in Panton without having habitat loss. This led to a discussion of where this information comes from. He said the State maintains a GIS mapping layer. Kathy suggested including the information source, since map layers that are in effect with the plan is approved may be replaced later and would not effect the plan. Sharon mentioned she found a map in Addison Town Plan on soil/prime agricultural land. ACRPC says one is being created for Panton.
f. There was a final review of what still needs to be done on the document. Jamie thought some tables could be communicated more clearly. He also suggested a better introduction so let the reader know what the town hopes to accomplish. Dennis commented that a landowner outside of the preferred sites will not be prevented from placing solar fields on their property. Jolyon said it's probably not possible to stop such a plan. They would still need to get a certification of public good and small facilities still need to meet the standard requirements.
g. Any further comments should be sent to Jolyon by tomorrow. Kathy thanked Jolyon for all the work he had done. Everyone agreed. Jolyon also thanked everyone for their comments.

4. a. Since the hour was late, Jamie asked if there were any comments on either the Land Use or Economy documents. Danelle thought we should push discussion off to next meeting. She wondered if there were changes to the 2017 Zoning regs that could be included in the Land Use document. She asked if Kyle could produce a list of any changes to include.
   b. sSharon also said she had changes to the second paragraph under 'Historic Land Use Patterns'. She will send those changes to Danelle by email.
5. a. Public comments: Sharon raised the issue of having a vision statement in all sections of the Plan. She likes Addison's Town Plan, which includes a box with the relevant survey

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questions. Danelle said she is referring back to survey questions as much as possible and noting them in the document.

6. Logan made a motion to adjourn; Gretchen seconded. ALL IN FAVOR. Meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Oliver
Assistant Town Clerk/Treasurer

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