

Work Session of the Planning Commission
September 14, 2015 – Town Hall, Greensboro, Vermont
Re: Town Plan Update

In Attendance: Mark Snyder, Linda Romans, Phil Gray (Chair), Joe Wood, Willie Smith, David Miltenberger and Dylan Laflam

Also in Attendance: Kristen Leahy, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

A review was made of the minutes from the work session on May 18, 2015. No changes were made. Motion to accept Minutes was made by Joe Wood and seconded by Linda Romans. All members were in favor.

Kristen conveyed the news that Willeys Store received \$80,000 in Vermont Tax Credits. Willeys Store was able to seek the tax credits due to the State of Vermont's acceptance of Greensboro's application for Village Center Designations. Both Greensboro Village and Greensboro Bend were granted Village Center designations by the Vermont Downtown Board.

Copies of the Craftsbury planning survey were distributed and Kristen presented an overview of the upcoming Town Plan update process.

GREENSBORO TOWN PLAN
SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

First. When: The current plan was updated in 2012. Municipal Plans expire in five years - 2017. The current plan, however, was amended in 2015 and reflects the newest State requirements. The new expiration date would be 2020. We have a window of approximately 2-5 years – **a new version must be available between 2017-2020.**

Second – Why can't we just update the Current Plan? The Town Plan was updated in 2012 and essentially in 2014 but a complete Town Assessment has not been accomplished since 2005. Opinions, circumstances, populations have all shifted within the town. There are certainly items which were not addressed in 2005. Additionally, Town Plans are receiving more attention in the Act 250 process and by the Public Services Board in their proceedings.

An amendment to a Town Plan was recently overturned by a Superior Judge in the Northeast Kingdom, in part due to the lack of community assessment. The Judge ruled that the amendment was not substantiated by any amount of assessment (surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.). The amendment was intended to support the denial of Wind Projects – a relatively new aspect to the zoning reality of the Northeast Kingdom.

Third – Does the Town Plan need to be completely re-written? The current Town Plan is lacking a few important aspects but generally addresses most of the current State requirements (see the Fourth point below). Some general problems with many Town Plans can be found in our document:

- Feasibility
- Conflicting Advice
- Hoarding

(Review Goals and Objectives in current document)

The most recent advice given on creating these documents focuses on the mantra of "**Less is Better.**" The suggestion was 5 to 10 achievable goals for the entire Town Plan.

Fourth – Part 1. What do We have in the Current Plan?

Currently, the Greensboro Town Plan has the following elements:

- I. Section 1 History
- II. Section 2 Major Objectives
- III. Section 3 Population (Written with NVDA)

- IV. Section 4 Land Use
- V. Section 5 Transportation
- VI. Section 6 Utilities and Facilities
- VII. Section 7 Natural Resources
- VIII. Section 8 Education
- IX. Section 9 Energy
- X. Section 10 Housing (Written with NVDA)
- XI. Section 11 Economic Development
- XII. Section 12 Recreation
- XIII. Section 13 Flood Resiliency (Written in 2014/15)
- XIV. Section 14 Regional Impact

Fourth – Part 2. What do We need to have in the next plan? The Vermont Statute which covers Municipal Plans is found in Title 24, Chapter 117, Subchapter 005, Section 4382. Town Plans must have the following (See Attached expanded version)

1. A statement of objectives, policies and programs of the municipality to guide the **FUTURE** growth and development of land, public services, and facilities and to protect the environment.
2. A land use plan (with **MAPS**)
3. A transportation plan (with **MAPS**)
4. A Utility and Facility plan (with **MAPS**)
5. A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.
6. An educational facilities plan (with **MAPS**)
7. **A recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan.**
8. **A statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region.**
9. An energy plan .
10. A housing element.
11. An economic development element.
12. A flood resilience plan.

The items in Bold are those which are generally lacking from our current document. Our Town Plan lacks future commentary (we focus on the past and the present), a regional impact section that fits the Statute, MAPS (we'll get to that), and a program for implementing the objectives.

Fifth – How will we do this? Five Steps Will be Needed.

Step 1 – Community Assessment. This is a complete review of where the town is at the present time and where the town wants to go in the future. Elements include an inventory of businesses in town, housing needs, population changes, land use changes, and more.

This can be accomplished through information available from the State of Vermont, the Natural Resources Atlas, information from NVDA and community input. The last element is one of the most important. It includes:

- a. Surveys
- b. Interviews
- c. Focus Groups
- d. Committee Outreach
- e. Walk and Talks

****This Element is the first in the process.** The upcoming Municipal Planning Grant could be utilized to hire Alison Low to assist in the Community Assessment process.

Step 2 – Developing a Shared Community Vision. Using the information from the community assessment, the Planning Commission will recommend degrees of change. The GPC will need to suggest where Greensboro will **maintain, evolve or transform**. Examples, conservation of agricultural lands, the Shoreland Protection District, the Greensboro Bend Village District, the Greensboro Village District, a new zoning district? *This is a critical step.*

Step 3 – Identify Goals and Measurable Objectives. Once the Community Vision is created/developed, the GPC will need to decide how to obtain that vision. Currently, the plan has goals and objectives but does not establish what actions are necessary. Ideally, there will be an action plan which identifies what the action will be, who is responsible, how the action will be paid for, and when will it be done (target date).

Step 4 – Map it Out. We are lacking some critical maps. This would be a second municipal planning grant – written for 2016 or 2017.

Step 5 – Identify Priority Action Items. Those action items in Step 3 need to be given a rank of importance.

Sixth – How will we engage the community? We need to encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process.

Inform: Through the Town Website, Social Media (Facebook page?), Front Porch Forum, the Hardwick Gazette, Town Meeting updates.

Consult: Surveys, Interviews, focus groups, open meetings, walk and talks.

Involve: Workshops, committees, advisory panels

Collaborate: Deliberative forums.

Question - who do we want to engage? Remember that not everyone will wish or be able to attend meetings.

Question – which chapters do members wish to focus their energy upon? Create committees in some cases - Economic Development, Land Use development, Greensboro Bend Village Land Use, Conservation/Agricultural development, Energy, Education, ????

Three final points – 1. The Town Plan is not the place to regulate items. This happens in the Zoning Bylaw. The Town Plan supports the Zoning Bylaw but is not designed to replace the regulatory aspect of the Bylaw. 2. The Select Board will have the final vote on the updated Town Plan, they need to be fully apprised of the process and they will need to participate in the process. 3. Nothing is too inconsequential to discuss – any proposed change (even if it seems to be trivial) needs to be completely examined by Greensboro citizens.

Finalize Municipal Planning Grant.

Begin Thinking about Questions for the Survey.

Begin Thinking about Committee Members.

Begin Thinking about what sections of town could have focus groups, walk and talks, interviews.

Motion to permit Kristen to write the Municipal Planning Grant with the purpose of engaging the services of Alison Low at NVDA was made by Dylan Laflamme and seconded by Willie Smith. All members were in favor.

Who is Responsible for Each Section?

- I. Section 1 History (Proof reading – Okay as is) **Willie Smith**
- II. Section 2 Major Objectives **N/A**
- III. Section 3 Population (Written with NVDA)
- IV. Section 4 Land Use **Mark Snyder & Dylan Laflam (Greensboro Bend emphasis), Linda Romans**
- V. Section 5 Transportation **Kristen Leahy**
- VI. Section 6 Utilities and Facilities **Dylan Laflam**
- VII. Section 7 Natural Resources **David Miltenberger, Linda Romans, Willie Smith**
- VIII. Section 8 Education **Phil Gray and Dylan Laflam**
- IX. Section 9 Energy **Mark Snyder and Dylan Laflam**
- X. Section 10 Housing (Written with NVDA) **Joe Wood**
- XI. Section 11 Economic Development **Joe Wood and Kristen Leahy**
- XII. Section 12 Recreation **Kristen Leahy**
- XIII.** Section 13 Flood Resiliency (Written in 2014/15) (Proof reading Essentially) **Phil Gray**
- XIV. Section 14 Regional Impact

Each GPC member will try to review their section and return to the next meeting with ideas as to questions and potential outreach that can occur within these areas.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 28 at 7pm.

Motion to adjourn was made by Dylan Laflam, seconded by Mark Snyder. All members were in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Submitted by Kristen Leahy, Zoning Administrator