



MINUTES

January 23, 2014 Gringo Jack's Restaurant - Manchester

Present: Tyler Yandow (Dorset), Bill Pennebaker (Shaftsbury), Rick Kelley (Manchester), Walt Klinger (Pownal), Ed Bove (Sunderland), Sheilah Printz (local public health), Scott Printz (energy), Nancy Faesy (Dorset), John LaVecchia (Dorset), Allison Hopkins (Manchester), Phil Chapman (Rupert), Meg Cottam (Glatenbury)

Mickey McGlasson (BCRC VISTA), Bill Colvin (BCRC staff), Allison Langsdale (BCRC staff), Jim Henderson (BCRC staff), Jim Sullivan (BCRC staff), Brandy Saxton (Place Sense)

I. **Approval of November 14, 2013 Minutes**

(Minutes were amended to note that Nancy Faesy was present.)

Motion to approve (Pennebaker). Second by Kelley. Passed unanimously.

II. **Introduction of New Commissioners**

Sullivan noted that the executive committee had authorized creation of a position for "community public health" and that a majority of commissioners have voted to approve Sheilah Printz's appointment to that position; he then introduced new commissioners Sheilah Printz (Community Public Health) and Allison Hopkins (Town of Manchester).

III. **Mixed Use Development**

Presentation: Brandy Saxton, Place Sense

Described mixed use development and "multiple use" development.

Demographic Trends: population is aging - mixed use development is a real benefit to people with mobility restrictions.

Saxton described how some communities have required mixed use buildings in new developments. She noted importance of two+ story buildings because even if not occupied now, the upper stories, once built, will provide flexibility for a range of future uses.

Multiple use buildings, with the ground floor commercial and upper floor residential were reviewed. Examples were shown from Colchester's new town center development and a new development in South Burlington. These buildings provide opportunities for a potential mix of a variety of uses over time based on changing market demand. Some towns use the planned unit development process and form-based codes to

create multiple use areas. A key component to all examples is "walkability" and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. Access to public transit is important also.

Information the South Burlington housing study and project can be found at:

<http://www.sburl.com/vertical/sites/%7BD1A8A14E-F9A2-40BE-A701-417111F9426B%7D/uploads/FinalAffordableHousingReport24Apr2013.pdf>

Barriers to mixed use development

Lot coverage restrictions: often see zoning regulations with very severe lot coverage restrictions. In downtowns and village centers, it is particularly important to have high lot coverage (80-90 percent is common in historic village centers and downtowns).

Building height: 30 foot limit is common; should consider if/how this can be increased (talk with local fire department to see what they can safely serve). Two stories is about 29 feet to peak; better to use an average ground level to average roof height to encourage a variety of rooflines and enable more usable space.

Parking: consider number of spaces actually needed, options for off-site, shared, and on-street parking to limit on-site parking requirements. Many land use regulations require 2 parking spaces per unit; based on actual car-ownership numbers in Bennington County, in mixed use development areas, 1 to 1.5 spaces per unit is probably adequate. Can consider parking requirements as a "district" - certain amount of parking within the district rather than on each individual property.

Accessibility – note that new buildings can be two stories without an elevator being required.

Public Perception – there may be a concern that mixed use development will fundamentally change community character and be out of scale. Properly designed developments can enhance village character and make the area more vibrant.

Infrastructure: lack of water and sewer systems, lack of "complete streets" design to accommodate bike-ped movements, and lack of stormwater systems and flooding concerns all can be barriers to good mixed use development.

Towns are starting to look at alternative wastewater systems that will allow for greater building density. Waitsfield has done a lot of study and work on this topic, have looked at use of decentralized wastewater. Large-scale public sewer systems are not likely to be an affordable option, so need to look at alternatives.

Need to consider pedestrians and provide a balance with needs of through vehicular traffic.

Stormwater and flooding - need to have or be able to construct necessary system for stormwater management and avoid flood hazard areas.

Bennington Region Mixed Use Study

Jim Sullivan reviewed some additional mixed use concepts, illustrating that adequate population exists in most of the region's towns to support interesting mixed use developments. He also noted that the traditional Vermont village-scape seen in most of our rural communities has a relatively high concentration of residential use and not a lot of diverse commercial use. The opposite tends to be true in the Bennington and Manchester downtown areas. He then highlighted some of the findings from the recently completed regional mixed use

study, looking at issues in Arlington, Shaftsbury, Stamford, Manchester, and Bennington. The study is available under the Sustainable Community Development section of www.bcrcvt.org.

Mixed Use Development and Downtown Bennington

BCRC VISTA staff, Mickey McGlasson presented a slide show focusing on Bennington's downtown. He noted the extremely large amount of parking relative to other land cover types in the downtown, actually about 50%, while buildings only cover about 22%.

BCRC has inventoried 58 parking lots and over 2,300 parking spaces in and around downtown. Findings thus far show that less than 40% of parking spaces are occupied during the day. Question of why there is such a surplus - excess parking and lack of places to go was explored.

BCRC is working with Bennington College looking at potential for redevelopment of underused or vacant spaces and buildings in the downtown.

McGlasson then presented an example of how a large vacant downtown lot could be utilized as a mixed use development. The parcel is located close to the center of the downtown and surrounded by underused parking lots. Mixed use development including 18,000 square foot of new building footprint - three stories - and redevelopment of existing vacant adjacent buildings was illustrated. Potential uses for the site could include a local food hub (identified as a need in the Bennington Farm to Plate Action Plan and various Bennington community development studies). A key component would be a significant amount of housing. Also retail space and possibly shared office space for entrepreneurial start-ups.

After some questions and answers, the meeting was adjourned. The March meeting will be held in Bennington. There is no regular meeting in February as there are two workshops scheduled dealing with flood resiliency planning and changes to flood hazard maps and flood insurance.

Respectfully submitted,

James Sullivan