

Planning Board Minutes 10/30/2023

Town Hall 6:30pm

Board Members Present: Ben Pendleton, Andrew Poland, Jessica Westhaver, Jeff Eilenberg, Andrea Perley (alt), John Bowers (alt)

Also Present: Richard Francis, Jessica Yates, Jamie Doherty, Bill Balicki, Rachel Bizarro, Erin Reeves

Meeting called to order at 6:30 by Ben Pendleton

New Business: Comprehensive Plan review

Jessica Westhaver stated that in reviewing the Comprehensive Plan the Planning Board needs to take a stance. She wondered how the plan was interpreting the PB function in the CP, and that the CP mentions forming new boards and committees' numerous times.

Mike Rosa asked if the PB should craft a letter as a board.

Ben Pendleton asked if the Select Board is taking a stand on the CP and that he felt the CP was not the place for the PB to give a formal endorsement until the states sees the plan and the town has had a public hearing.

John Bowers stated that he thought the PB becoming too intertwined in the implementation of the CP was not a good idea and that a lot of the plan is going to be hard to implement.

Andrea Perley stated that it was her first review of the plan, and she had a lot of questions. She pointed out that some of the things in the CP are already being done. She felt that the mixing of too many committees was not a good idea, and it may be hard to come up with people who want to serve on the new committees suggested by the CP. She told the CPC how much she appreciated how much work went into the plan. She also addressed that the plan is long, and it is a lot for everyone to take in, suggesting there needs to be an executive summary.

She also stated that the 600 people who took the CP survey does not represent the real population of Bristol and that all the people of Bristol need to be reached to let them know how they will be affected.

Jessica Westhaver said she was worried the CP will not be an accurate representation of that they could do as a board. It is a long document; everyone will not read it and it has a lot of working parts. She also has concerns that a lot of the work will fall on the PB, asking if the Select Board will have a new implementation committee or will it be passed on to the PB.

Andrea asked where will the people come from to be on these new committees, finding people to commit can be hard. She also pointed out that the way the plan is written could add more work to the Code Enforcement Officer.

Mike Rosa asked if the PB should put something on the table. Andrea questioned if so, what was expected from the PB document.

Ben said they should put something together about what the PB will have to do.

John Bowers said a summary should be put together for everyone because as a voter "If I don't know what it is, I won't approve".

Andrea said she felt that all Boards should meet with the CPC.

Mike Rosa wanted it known that the first time the PB met with CP there were parts of the plan that were blank and that the PB had not been assigned certain tasks. He felt that with the blank parts in the plan it was not possible to approve or disapprove anything without all the information. He felt that the PB was never informed of the CPC actions. Ben told Mike that there were public meetings that everyone could have attended.

Jessica Westhaver suggested writing specific questions to the CPC, meeting a few more times and having some back and forth between the CPC and PB.

Ben suggested meeting in 2 more weeks with specific questions. Nov. 16th would be the meeting.

Richard Francis asked if the questions could be submitted to the CPC before the meeting via email. Jessica said that everything needs to be transparent. Ben told everyone to get their questions together by Thursday Nov. 9th, email them to Jessica and she would compile a document that could be shared with the CPC and the PB before the Nov 16th meeting.

Jessica Yates said it was important to remind everyone that the CP and everything in it are suggestions, nothing has to happen the way it was written. Also that this plan can be used or not and that all long term plans would have to be voted on by the town anyway.

Bill Balicki said that the plan is too long, most people won't read it and narrowing it down would be great. He also said that the plan does not seem as a suggestion as the CPC has stated.

Bill went on to say that at the Future Land Use workshop there should have been a 5th option, which is do nothing. The choice that was made of the 4 options is the lesser of all evils and not what the town wants and that this is being forced down our throats. The people here already want the town the way it is. He cautioned the PB to do something in the best interest of the town.

Andrea stated that the PB job is to enforce ordinances and not about individual feelings.

Ben checked if there was anything else for the CP from the PB. There were no other questions, so he reminded everyone to get their questions ready by Thursday the 9th.

Jamie Doherty let the PB know it had been a lot of work over 3 years. Jessica Yates reminded the PB that the state makes you answer specific questions and that is what made the plan so long.

Ben motioned for approval of minutes from 9/7/23. Jessica seconded, all in favor, Jeff abstained.

All questions for the CP will be to Jessica by Thursday 11/9 to be emailed to Richard Francis and Jessica Yates.

Concentrating on future land use, Appendix C and the housing section was suggested.

Richard Francis stated that the CP was under strict guidelines from the state, and they had to write strategies for everything. He also said that a summary of the plan is the first 8 to 10 pages of the plan.

Jessica Westhaver informed the PB of an email from the Offshore Wind Project that they are taking public comment. It was asked if the project was going to make landfall in our area and the answer was no, south of us.

Next meeting Thursday November 16th, follow up with Comprehensive Plan.

Ben adjourned at 7:11