In BK 4

**Pittsford Planning Commission Meeting**
**February 26, 2015**

**Board Members Present**: Kathryn Brown, Trish Lewis, David Soulia

**Also in Attendance:** Jeff Biasuzzi – Zoning Administrator, Ed Bove – Executive Director of Rutland Regional Planning Commission

**1. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01PM by Trish Lewis – Vice-Chair.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

A motion was made by David Soulia and seconded by Kathryn Brown to accept the agenda as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**3. Administrative Matters**

***a. Approval of Minutes***

A motion was made by Kathryn Brown and seconded by David Soulia to accept and approve the January 22, 2015 minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**4. New Business**

***a. Presentation by Ed Bove – Director of Rutland Regional Planning Commission***

Trish Lewis introduced Ed Bove from the Regional Planning Commission who was present to provide an enhanced consultation with the Pittsford Planning Commission. Mr. Bove was present to talk about the Town Plan and the zoning piece that is currently with the Pittsford Select Board. Mr. Bove also wanted to discuss the results of the Walk audits that took place in October.

With regard to the Town Plan, Mr. Bove provided information on the Vermont State statutes that are used at the regional, town and state level. Statute 4302 outlines the general purpose and twelve state goals that are considered to be good settlement type patterns and Statute 4382 outlines the required elements of a town plan. When the Planning Commission puts together an update of the Town Plan, this will provide a guide to enable it to be approved through the Regional Planning Commission. David Soulia questioned the ultimate goal of the Town Plan, noting there are proposed zoning changes being discussed. Mr. Bove stated the end goal is going to be different in each town and the core goal is to make resilient places that endure political, economic and natural disasters and is a model for development and growth. He noted many pieces come together to create this model and the goals have been crafted around the older type resilient model that was used by our earliest settlers (original Vermonters).

A discussion ensured concerning mixed use and building forms. It is not to say that big box stores are not useful, but they could be better. Trish Lewis has seen some of these types of stores in the second story of buildings that are empty and it helps to maintain the traditional look. Mr. Bove stated mixed uses will provide more money for the town and those building will pay more to towns than single use layouts. Ms. Lewis noted there is an aging Vermont population that needs to be able to have services within walking

distance of where they live. Mr. Bove stated the thought is that businesses can be put in a place that makes money for everyone and the main focus is trying to create an enduring, resilient place that is better for future generations.

In Speaking of the Processes: The Planning Commission would adopt the Town Plan and the Rutland Regional Planning Commission has to approve the plan to assure that it meets the criteria of both the 4302 and 4382 Statutes. Once approved, it would unlock funding through block grants and other avenues. Trish Lewis asked if there is the ability to obtain planning grants to assist with development of the Plan. Mr. Bove advised there are grants available to assist with creating studies and hosting public workshops. Pittsford has not applied for a municipal planning grant in over eight years and would likely be a strong candidate for a grant. The applications for these grants are due in September and the Regional Planning Commission can assist with submitting the grant.

Jeff Biasuzzi reported that the Town of Wallingford has been working with Mr. Bove's organization and they have assisted with a planning grant. Mr. Biasuzzi suggested Mr. Bove be provided a summary of the zoning changes, as there seems to be some concern with the changes for people in town.

David Soulia stated he was raised in Rutland and had moved away. He has moved back to Pittsford because he thinks it is one of the best communities. He is concerned with too many hoops that people need to jump through due to the zoning rules and regulations that end up costing people more money. He has had people comment to him that the changes are more hoops to jump through and it is stifling the ability for growth in the Town. Ms. Lewis noted the Planning Commission has to consider the entire Town and consideration has to be given to resiliency for natural disasters and how to react to them all this goes into the creation process of any by-law. Mr. Soulia stated Pittsford has the type of community where people can count on their neighbors unlike many areas. He noted that people are concerned about many of the regulations, as there are compliances that are required to run businesses and these add additional rules. Mr. Soulia is not in favor of large box stores. Kathryn Brown stated there were a lot of complaints when the Planning Commission wanted to change the zoning maps to avoid these types of businesses. Mr. Soulia stated it is back to what is the main goal of the zoning, having a clear message and straightening out the rural information. Ms. Brown noted when she started her business; she did not feel that the regulations were an issue. Mr. Bove questioned if a lot of the uses have been changed. Trish Lewis advised many were changed from conditional to permitted, which would assist the business owners and make the zoning easier. Mr. Soulia noted the Planning Commission is tasked with the job of telling people what they can and cannot do with their own property. Jeff Biasuzzi stated what the Planning Commission is doing is setting guidelines to assist the Zoning Administrator and the more important part of the Planning Commission is acting on subdivision issues and other permit issues. It was noted the Town Plan has to be in accordance with state and regional planning. The three main issues of zoning as expressed at the hearing were the Home Occupation Section, as Pittsford has a regulation against auto repair as a home occupation. There is also an issue with the statement concerning a Wildlife Corridor and the third issue relates to the regulations on signs. Trish Lewis stated if there are no regulations, the town does not have the authority to act upon issues that may come up. Mr. Bove stated this type of zoning keeps the town from turning into Rutland, but there is a delicate balance of figuring out what the townspeople want and what has been proven to work. He noted the town could apply for an MPG (municipal planning grant) to assist in determining what is wanted. With creating places that are enduring, it needs to be determined what is acceptable to people and it would be good to explore this in some type of a town forum. The Town Plan is supposed to be the top document in providing the goals and vision. The zoning is created to implement the Town Plan. Mr. Bove

suggested perhaps there could be ways to tweak the zoning to address the issues that are being expressed. Kathryn Brown stated there were meetings with civic groups and the Planning Commission heard that people like a village atmosphere and a bedroom community. Mr. Bove stated the southern corridor of Pittsford is already developed. Mr. Bove stated Act 2509L is the new criteria that came into effect last year and talks about existing settlement patterns and anything outside of that indicates sprawl and a permit will not be allowed. He stated this is a state-wide issue and the Route 4 and 7 interchange is being tied up because of these types of issues. Mr. Bove noted this is more of a design issue and not use-type issues. There is a trend in moving more to form-base and away from use-base type zoning. Mr. Biasuzzi noted the prevailing attitude is that there is not a need for change and the regulations only add layers to the bureaucracy. Mr. Bove stated the Planning Commission has to show the value of the zoning and how it is protecting the town and property values. Mr. Biasuzzi advised within the State of Vermont, a town that has both zoning and subdivision, Act 250 will not be involved with most projects less than 10 acres. Mr. Soulia suggested advising the public about the Act 250 issue if there is not zoning or subdivision as this is a selling point for adopting zoning and especially subdivision regulations. He stated there needs to be information provided as to why these types of regulations are required. Mr. Soulia agreed that strip malls are not wanted; but there needs to be something in place to assist the property owners with their property rights, as the purpose of zoning is to allow a legal means for handling those types of situations.

Ed Bove noted he has reviewed the Pittsford Town Plan. The Plan is due for renewal in 2017 and the Planning Commission should start working on it next year. He has made note of some pieces that need to be included in the Plan, with the biggest pieces being in Flood Resiliency that have been added after Irene. There is not a Cultural Resources section in the Plan that would talk about the library, churches, and groups in town, such as the Historical Society. There are also no policies about Natural Resources. Jeff Biasuzzi stated as far as updating the information, the Planning Commission has current mapping of resource corridors and a lot of information from outside sources. Mr. Biasuzzi asked if the Rutland Regional Planning Commission had a person on staff that helps with natural resources. Mr. Bove stated natural resources are also water resources and advised there are planning grants that the town could apply for to assist in this effort.

Mr. Bove provided a handout on recommendations from the Regional Planning Commission about building a walkable community. Mr. Bove stated safety and health are some of the reasons why walkable communities are good. The data also shows that resale of properties are higher for places that are walkable. Recommendations were provided for traffic calming measures that included reducing the speed limit, adding wider shoulders dedicated to other uses and adding more trees to form street walls. Mr. Bove stated Pittsford already has some great amenities such as a village green, some sidewalks and crosswalks. Kathryn Brown noted concern regarding the upgrade of Route 7 as it will enable traffic to travel faster through town. Ed Bove stated the Town needs to take heed of the engineering of the Route 7 project. Mr. Bove noted he will provide a written report on this evening's consultation to the Planning Commission.

***b. General Introduction of Planning Commission Members***

A motion was made by Dave Soulia and seconded by Kathryn Brown to postpone Item b: General Introduction of Planning Commission Members to a subsequent meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

*c. Election of Planning Commission Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson*

A motion David Soulia and seconded by Kathryn Brown to elect the Planning Commission Chairperson and the Vice-Chair a meeting prior to election day (normally scheduled time), due to the resignation of Don Nickless. **The motion passed unanimously.**

A motion was made by Kathryn Brown and seconded by David Soulia to appoint Trish Lewis as Chairperson of the Pittsford Planning Commission. **The motion passed unanimously.**

A motion was made by David Soulia and seconded by Trish Lewis to appoint Kathryn Brown as the Vice-Chairperson of the Pittsford Planning Commission. **The motion passed unanimously.**

***d. Presentation by Trish Lewis: Overview and Report of Select Board Hearing of 2/18/15 and Public Meeting on Proposed Zoning Rule Adoption***

David Soulia suggested providing more explanation and determining what can be done to alleviate the concerns of people over the zoning regulations, if the Town wants to bring business into town or have the main village as the primary focus. Kathryn Brown stated the Planning Commission will need to obtain feedback from the Select Board prior to moving forward. Trish Lewis stated there is a goal in the Town Plan, but it is more subjective than what the coding would be. Trish Lewis stated there is a statement of purpose that is legal verbiage, but additional information to show the benefits would be helpful and could be added in the beginning of the regulations. Mr. Soulia expressed concern that the Wildlife Corridor locks the land from usage. It was noted this is not the case, but it is not clearly stated. Mr. Soulia stated this is something that is already done and should not be forced and if it is not presented in the proper light, it should be removed. Jeff Biasuzzi stated if a town is going to regulate a large area, he sees where people are going to get excited. Trish Lewis stated this does offer both pluses and negatives and during the next round of rewrites the Planning Commission can work on this item. Mr. Soulia questioned the intent of the Wildlife Corridor statement. It was noted that A & R used this during the meeting against the wind towers in order to help the overwhelming majority of people in the town push through their stance on this issue. The Planning Commission does not want to be without some statement, as there were many people that were against the wind towers and in order to protect those people against future wind tower plans, there has to be something that can be named to help protect the land if the Public Service Board reviews another project.

**5. Public Comment**

There was no discussion held.

**6. Other Business**

***a. Discussion of suggestions or revisions to proposed zoning rules as results of Select Board Hearing and public input***

This item will be discussed at a subsequent meeting.

**7. Next Regular Meeting**

Rev

**Thursday, March 26, 2015 @ 7:00PM**

**8. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Kathryn Brown and seconded by David Soulia to adjourn the Pittsford Planning Commission meeting at 9:18PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary

Approved by,

The Pittsford Planning Commission