

BETHEL PLANNING COMMISSION
DRAFT Minutes for 03/18/15 Meeting

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Attending: Fred Dieffenbach [Chair], Peter Dohrn, Carla Hodgdon, Carl Russell [Selectboard], Chris Sargent [TRORC], Tom Warhol [Conservation Commission], Cecil Washburn.

1. **Call to Order:** 7:03 PM.
2. **Review / Revise Agenda:** One item [Carla] for 'OTHER'.
3. **Minutes of 02/16/15 Meeting:** Approved as distributed in Draft.
4. **Correspondence:** Copy of proposed amendments to Regional Plan as well as dates of Public Hearings. Changes are either accommodated in our recent update of the Bethel Town Plan or will be made at the next update.

5. Organizing for Proposing Zoning Ordinance Amendments:

a. Feedback from Zoning Administrator(s), DRB, others. Zoning Administrators strongly encourage combining Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. This was also Preston's recommendation [former Zoning Administrator]. [We are considering doing this.] Also suggested that Base Zoning District boundaries follow property lines. [This would be extremely difficult and unwieldy, resulting in very uneven district lines. We will consider language that clarifies minimum lot size for any subdivision that includes property in more than one Base Zoning District.] No one had any feedback from Andrew's query to the DRB.

b. Review of Flood Hazard Area Maps: TRORC [Chris] provided and the group reviewed maps and a narrative of flood risk analysis delineating floodway, flood plain, and river corridor areas as well as mapped points of infrastructure damage as a result of Tropical Storm Irene. Bethel currently allows new development in the flood plain with conditions: it does not address river corridor areas [mapped for major streams, a 50' buffer area for upland streams such as Camp, Gilead and Lilliesville Brooks. Any amendments to existing Flood Hazard Bylaws, if more restrictive, would only apply to new development- existing would be grandfathered. Possible changes include: (i) prohibition of new development in floodplain; (ii) prohibition of specific types of development in floodplain; (iii) increasing requirements for new development in floodplain; (iv) create river corridor protection area.

c. Discussion: setback requirements and implications for Emergency Relief Assistance Fund (ERAF) Program reimbursement: Current Bethel Flood Hazard regulations meet the minimum requirements to be part of the Nat'l Flood Insurance Program for residential development. FEMA normally reimburses municipalities up to 75% of the cost for damages to municipal infrastructure. Vermont created the ERAF Program to reduce the municipal share of disaster recovery: up to 17.5%. This is a 'step' percentage dependent on the town's Flood Hazard Area/River Corridor regulations. For a maximum State share, town's must adopt river corridor protections and include a 'no new structures' clause in their regulations. Without these, the State share is decreased and the Town share correspondingly increased. Our Assistant Town Manager ran figures for flood damage to Bethel's infrastructure in 2007, 2011 [T.S. Irene], and 2013 to provide quantatative examples of what the 'step' reimbursement would entail- Thank you, Abbie.

- d. Plan for Public Forum:** Advertise for April 15th. Gather public sentiment regarding (i) new development in floodplain; (ii) river corridor areas; (iii) combining Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. Provide clarification: that 50' setback is an expansion, not entirely new; that ERAF is for municipal infrastructure reimbursement- most potential new development in floodplain is residential or commercial; that river corridor area expands flood plain for the White River- is new for upland streams; that all existing structures are grandfathered if regulations change. We will also review the previous build-out-analysis maps to identify the number of lots affected [anticipated to be 'not many'].
- 6. OTHER:** Carla [clerk] leaves for TN/FL tomorrow morning. Minutes will be late per State statute but WILL get done. To facilitate printing, they will be 'attached' and also included in the body of an email. Fred will print and surface mail copies to Peter and Cecil.
- 7. Next Meeting:** Wednesday, **APRIL 15th** – **Public Forum** [as per 5.d above]. Chris will fashion announcements for electronic and community postings.
- 8. Adjourn:** 8:23 PM.

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