

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2024
APPROVED NOVEMBER 7, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Diane Clemens, Chair; Scott McCormick, Vice-Chair; Elena Juodisius; Elijah Massey, Kirstie Paschall

ADMINISTRATION: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Adam & Eva Slocum

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Clemens called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Mr. Yuen requested that Item 5b, “Land Development Code Amendments” be heard before Item 5a, “Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Master Plan Update.” All agreed.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

None.

4. MINUTES

a. September 5, 2024

MOTION by DIANE CLEMENS, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, to approve the minutes of September 5, 2024, with changes. Motion passed 5-0.

-Ms. Clemens requested that the word “no” be changed to “not” in the second sentence of the first paragraph in Item 5c.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Land Development Code Amendments

Ms. Yuen said that the PC has been working on including the “low hanging fruit” to eliminate barriers to developing additional housing. He described potential changes to parking regulations. The current LDC states that parking in the R1 or R2 districts shall not take up more than 30% or 20 feet of the linear frontage of the lot, whichever is less. With the current LDC regulations, every unit needs at least one parking space. Thus, it is not possible to park enough cars to meet current housing needs with three or fourplexes. To mitigate this, Mr. Yuen has proposed separating the lot into three separate areas, each with different parking requirements. These are listed as areas A, B and C. As a test case, he brought up an image of a potential fourplex conversion in the R2 district belonging to the Slocum family. Mr. Slocum said that he has an existing duplex that he would like to convert to a fourplex. He said that the 30% requirement is preventing him from adding additional units to the property. Parking in the back would not be viable.

Mr. Yuen said that this particular property could make a strong case for a variance to the side setback. There is no way to access the back spots with the current width requirements. Mr. Yuen suggested having some type of waiver available to access parking. Mr. Yuen asked the PC if they felt that adding more housing was justified for including more parking that is visible from the road. Ms. Clemens said that it is

important for the regulations to have the flexibility needed to allow quadplexes. Mr. Yuen said that the proposal is to have standards associated with the number of units (up to four units), and to allow for a wider curb cut for more units. Ms. Juodisius said that she does not have an issue with vehicles driving across or parking on the grass. Mr. Slocum said that many families have two cars, and that tandem parking would be preferable to limiting the number of spaces. The location of sidewalks restricting the amount of parking was discussed. In cases where there is no sidewalk, it would make sense to treat areas A and B the same and allow up to 40% of the width of the lot to be allocated to the driveway and/or parking. This would not be allowable for a single-family home. Mr. Yuen will include these changes into the draft.

Mr. Yuen detailed potential changes to the LDC:

- The site plan requirements can be quite arduous for small landowners. Properties with under five units are proposed to be exempt.
- There is an added provision for the Bianchi provision. This states that if the municipality does not enforce a violation for fifteen years it is not enforceable. This is not the same as an existing non-conformity. The violation would not be considered a legal property, however no enforcement can come against it.
- Some type of non-conforming temporary signs need to be removed within ninety days.
- Provisions are added for residential garages, in properties up to quadplexes. This will not allow a very large garage with a smaller house.
- The definition of impervious surface for stormwater purposes was clarified. Permeable driveways will not count towards lot coverage.
- Uses which are not on the use chart will be treated like those to which they are substantially similar. If no use is substantially similar, they will be treated as a conditional use. Aerodromes are an excluded use.
- Technical updates were made to lighting regulations. No zoning permit would be required to install lighting for up to a four-plex.
- A “single housekeeping unit” was better defined.
- Additional language was added to the section on food trucks. These would be treated as a permanent, rather than temporary use. Food trucks are permitted wherever eating and drinking establishments are allowed, and no full site plan approval is needed. If there are two or more food trucks on a single lot bathrooms must be made available.
- Due to sewer regulations, a floor plan will be required for any new property besides a single family dwelling.

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, to move that the Planning Commission warn the Land Development Code Amendments as amended, for public hearing on November 7, 2024. Motion passed 5-0.

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, to move that the Planning Commission approve the Summary Report as amended. Motion passed 5-0.

a. Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Master Plan Update

Mr. Yuen said that the design charette was last weekend, garnering quite a bit of media attention. The consultant will be presenting their findings and ways to further refine the major ideas at a future meeting.

6. MEMBERS UPDATES

Ms. Clemens said that she and Mr. Yuen attended a county housing discussion, which was very informative. There is a statewide housing conference on November 14th. On March 31st, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns is holding a zoning conference. The PC will be presenting to the City Council on December 11 regarding general updates and the LDC. Mr. McCormick suggested that future planning for the PC should be discussed at the next meeting. He said that the state Climate Action Plan is nearing it's final draft, and that there will be a series of stakeholder engagement meetings coming up.

7. STAFF UPDATES

None.

8. ADJOURN

MOTION by SCOTT MCCORMICK, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 PM. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville