Town of Starksboro

Planning Commission

Minutes (DRAFT)

February 20, 2025

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Members Present: Dennis Casey, Dan Kuzio, Dan Nugent, David Schmidt

Unable to Attend: Luke McCarthy

Others Present: None

Visitors: Marguerite Gregory, Peter Gregory, Robert Turner, John Dickason, Dan Baker (zoom)

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Meeting called to order by Chair Dennis Casey at 6:31pm

**Visitors Business:**

M. Gregory provided a copy of the email correspondence she sent to PC. Spoke about concerns about private landing areas as proposed in the new zoning bylaws and provided research documentation and summaries of conversations had with other parties. Read guidelines of state regulations, comments by former transportation board member, and neighbor. Suggested postponing landing strip regulations for a year.

P. Gregory urged caution and suggested conditional use as opposed to permitting landing areas.

R. Turner expressed concern about ROD and whether the proposed regulations have been reviewed by appropriate parties. There is some concern about language discrepancies. Asked about the revision of the Town Plan and if it will be major or minor.

J. Dickason spoke to affordable housing.

D. Baker questioned if the current proposal for the ROD is in line with the Town Plan. Also noted there are several policies that the ROD district would violate. Suggested that if the ROD is to move forward the Town Plan should be amended first. Concerned about removing traffic, noise, and other regulatory standards. Noted that some language is concerning, cited campgrounds as year-round use and outdoor recreational facilities being so broadly defined.

**PC Current Business:**

1. Approve outstanding minutes
   1. Minutes of 1/16 meeting reviewed

**Motion:** D. Nugent moves to accept the minutes as written. D. Schmidt seconds.

**Vote:** All in favor

2. Review and discuss feedback from public hearing

a. Reviewed notes from public hearing and discussed each question raised at hearing in the order they were asked.

b. D. Kuzio addressed the best way to publicize comments about the zoning rewrites. VLTC has some concerns about publicizing comments through a form or google doc, and prefers comments be posted directly to the website. They could be batched and posted fairly easily. There is no obligation to post comments. At the very least a file of all comments needs to be kept. PC will work on getting public comments on the website.

c. Noise standard: changed to a flat 70dB. Discussed putting examples of what 70dB would be in standard. R. Turner asked what dB level a chainsaw would be. Around 110 or 120. Technically a chainsaw or leaf blower could only be used for an hour without violating the noise rules. Town doesn’t have capacity to monitor noise levels. Current noise rules taken from OSHA and is more of an industrial regulation for inside a facility, not outside.

d. Definition of Recreational Trail – that is something we need to include in the definitions section. There are a few additional definitions that should be included such as differentiation between motorized and non-motorized trails. We should also consider e-bike usage in relation to trail use.

e. Why are landing strips allowed in 3 different districts? D. Schmidt emphasized again that it would be irresponsible not to have a mechanism for landing areas in the bylaws. Spoke about how the town plan talks about remote wilderness areas and how the plan says roads can break up these tracts of land, so landing areas and access by air might make sense. D. Nugent commented that conditional use may be appropriate. Discussion ensued about characteristics of landing areas – flat, fields, clearing out forest area, etc. – and how different situations fit into the standards. D. Baker commented that the currently proposed regs are vague. There is no restriction on landings per day, etc. D. Schmidt reminded everyone that the state and federal government take all information and public feedback into account before permitting landing areas. Just because the wording is vague in our standards does not mean the state and federal standards are vague. M. Gregory stated that the state and federal entities can’t regulate land use and only the town can. P. Gregory stated that the town should regulate the location of the landing areas.

f. Potential commercial nature of ROD – D. Casey emphasized that the ROD was not envisioned for “commercial” use such as gas stations or convenience stores, and there isn’t the population to support commercial use anyway. The ROD is intended for recreational use such as a Nordic center. D. Nugent stated that existing bylaws would limit excessive growth in the ROD. R. Turner suggested being more targeted with the district instead of a blanket 600-foot area. Also expressed concern that the conservation commission was not consulted before creating the district. D. Schmidt stated that all but one use in the ROD is conditional use and the DRB would be responsible for ensuring that land use is appropriate. Regional planning has reviewed the draft by laws and stated it complies with the town plan.

3. PC Roundtable

a. Tabled for next meeting

**Motion**: D. Nugent moved to adjourn the meeting. D. Schmidt seconded.

**Vote**: All in Favor

Meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm

Minutes submitted by L. McCarthy.