

**HYDE PARK
TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
May 13, 2019**

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Members Present: Bob Malbon, Brian Jones, Zac Cota, Vicki Emerson and Eric Williams
Members Absent: None
Staff: Ron Rodjenski, Town Administrator
Guests: Joanne Garton, VT Urban & community Forest, Roadside Resiliency Program; Seth Jensen, Senior Planner LCPC; Jim Heath, Monica Heath, Liz Courtney, Hyde Park Historic Sites Committee; Town Tree Warden Bob Whalen; GMAVT did not videotape this meeting.

Bob called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

- 1) **Welcome**, agenda changes – no changes to the agenda.
- 2) **Resilient ROWs Assessment** – Joanne Garton reviewed her study of rural roads in ten Vermont towns with the results to be combined into one statewide manual on roadside resiliency. Hyde Park’s draft report was presented that included recommendations on emerald ash borer impacts and stormwater management techniques, which is broken into two parts; a process of pre-planning municipal road work and mitigating impacts on roadside vegetation, and the second part is a set of inventory maps of Hyde Park roads. The clear zone that is actively mowed by the Town and is wider compared to the other study communities, so the unmanaged vegetated width (outside the clear zone but still within the public ROW) is narrower. Joanne noted that the ash borer is on its way to Hyde Park and the impact on the town roads will be significant, as with other towns, with many dead ash trees quickly becoming hazard trees and needing to be removed from roadsides. Town Tree Warden Whalen noted that removal of ash and elm trees are beginning this summer with new funding recently approved by town voters. Zac noted that an efficiency of scale at the regional level is being discussed by the regional invasive group discussion; possibly finding ways to reuse the ash via chipping and then used for biomass fuel, etc. Bob Whalen suggested taking a cautious approach as the disease progresses and first determining the best method of tree removal (timing and lowest town cost) via an action plan and town wide goals set out in a new tree ordinance for both removal procedures and setting consistent standards for replanting. Zac stated that Vermont communities are all working on the same issue and should be contacted for group discussion on how best to approach tree removals. Joanne noted that the ash tree is very brittle soon after it dies, and Zac noted some tree contractors do not work on ash trees because of that danger. Joanne noted that the Town should work with the four local electric companies so any work they are planning on tree removal is not duplicated by the town highway. Invasive plants and pests are also in the report and knotweed was a big issue for Hyde Park’s town highway crew, especially around road signs. The crew feels there is very little long-term solutions and only regular cutting is happening now. Joanne felt that ash tree removal could wait a bit but a plan for removal should be developed now. Bob Whalen noted that there may be genetic resistance to ash borer in some trees, but it would be a very small percentage of ash. Zac felt it was important to let the general public know that the disease & costs are coming soon – and hazard trees along public roads and near homes will need to be removed. Joanne felt that an adoption of a local tree ordinance can help guide future removals and what types of plantings are done to promote resiliency to other potential pests in the future. Bob Whalen noted that he now follows the broader tree protection procedures in state law only, without specific guidance that could be provided in a local ordinance. Joanne suggested that the town tree warden continue to work with the town road crew to help decipher trees that are good to keep in the ROW and others that should be removed. Zac felt that the implementation of this type of work and lending support to the tree warden on public outreach would be a perfect task for a town conservation commission. Hyde Park’s final report will be combined with the other nine towns for the state report later this year or early 2020. Bob noted that following the town’s draft EAB preparedness plan and adopting the tree ordinance would be his recommendation for next steps along with the removal of hazard trees this summer to then better understand what the most cost-effective tree removal method for taxpayers is.

- 3) **North Hyde Park** - Decentralized Wastewater System & Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) Grant. Seth Jensen explained that NBRC forest economy grants relate to economic development in smaller communities that they might not be able to access state economic development programs. For example, Wolcott looked at decentralized wastewater for their village with last year's Northern Borders funding. The Seth noted that some of the options for municipal sewer could benefit the existing smaller lots in the village, such as around the North Hyde Park post office and Grange Hall. NBRC grant requests are a two-step process, first the Letter of Interest, then if the project is selected, NBRC will request a full grant application for their review. Seth noted that wood product companies are required to have an individual stormwater permit and looking at possible ways to pre-determine permitting issues would be helpful to future investors in NHP. The proposed grant's scoping process would help determine what is realistic; i.e. more wood processing, food processing, manufacturing, etc. Seth noted that wastewater systems would use pumps or gravity so that specific option would be something evaluated. Eric thought the \$30,000 estimate was too high and Zac stated that the town's local match would \$15,000 and the goal is to help pursue new development in North Hyde Park. Liz stated that a public-facing business in NHP would be great along with new sidewalks. Bob Malbon noted that having good wastewater systems will bring up property values. Jim Heath noted that sidewalks, street trees and wastewater will entice people to locate in NHP and the planning commission should support the new generation of residents that are showing interest in NHP. Eric stated that it would be better to use the money to buy land now for a future Village septic area rather than study all options first. Zac noted that before the town buys land it should be studied. Seth noted the community could identify possible parcels for technical investigations as a first step in the grant's scope of work and Brian agreed that water depth, wetlands, etc. would need to be evaluated for any potential site. This grant will help determine the most appropriate location for wastewater. The grant would also look at what is needed in NHP to foster new forestry business and the redevelopment of NHP. Bob Whalen noted that a feasibility study puts the Town in a much better position in future grant projects and shows investors that the town is interested in the area. Motion by Zac to submit a letter of interest for the Northern Borders Regional Commission. Seconded by Vicki. Discussion: Eric stated that he would like to talk to more residents of North Hyde Park. Liz noted that investment in NHP benefits the entire Town. Zac noted that he likes to treat Hyde Park as a whole and focusing on NHP is a good chance to swing the balance to look at the entire town. Zac felt that it was up to the volunteers to make sure a final report's recommendations are pursued in subsequent planning and investment by the Town. Seth explained that LCPC could be the project manager and oversee consultants that would work with the planning commission and residents. Eric asked if implementation cost estimates would be in the final report and Seth said yes, the scope of work could require the report to include costs and phasing options for those costs, including options for the sewer system to be expanded over time. Voting: 5 in favor, 0 against, motion passed.
- 4) **Grange Hall** – Jim Heath explained that legal work is holding up the construction work on the grange roof. Ron explained that clearing the title would first require a notice in the newspaper, giving residents and other interest parties 41 days from the date of first publication to file an objection to the Town receiving title. Hopefully, the court proceedings would be completed by the end of this July.
- 5) **Conservation Commission** – Discussion on forming an exploratory subcommittee on creation of Hyde Park Conservation Commission. Zac stated that he was initially interested in volunteering on a conservation commission when he moved to Hyde Park, but then found out that Hyde Park did not have one. Zac explained some of the statutory powers and duties which primarily is an advisory role to the planning commission. Erik asked if the conservation commission would develop a permitting process and Zac said no, the commission works with plans, inventories and reports in an advisory role to other town boards. Bob Whalen expressed support for a conservation commission to help him with his work. Zac noted that the town energy committee is similarly established and many towns in Vermont have established both advisory committees. Zac stated the process to create a conservation commission could be that the planning commission recommends the creation of the commission to the Selectboard first. If the Selectboard agrees, then they would add an article to the next Town Meeting warning. Zac noted that one example is the Monkton Conservation Commission who helped install a large culvert for wildlife under a busy road while in other towns, the commission oversees a town forest. Bob Whalen would be appreciative of a committee that he could work with on projects like public outreach on the ash borer and other invasive pests. Bob Malbon asked for a 10-point summary of what a CC could do for Hyde Park and Zac noted that the Vermont Association of Conservation Commissions could be invited to provide an overview of CC's in Vermont. Zac and Bob Whalen will work on a summary of CC benefits and bring back at planning commission's June meeting.

- 6) **Zoning Brochure** and Cut Sheets for the Website – Ron handed out the current drafts of the zoning brochure and the cut sheets for the town website and noted that the town website would be updated to include the documents.
- 7) **Minutes:** – Motion by Eric to approve the 04/08/2019 minutes as written, seconded by Brian. Voting: 5 in favor, 0 against, motion passed.
- 8) **Other Business** – None.
- 9) **Adjourn** – Motion by Eric to adjourn, seconded by Zac, no objection, meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Ron Rodjenski