Braintree Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
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April 17, 2025
7:00pm
Braintree Town Office, 932 Vermont Route 12A, Braintree, VT 05060
Virtually: Join Zoom Meeting
https://zoom.us/j/92791782101?pwd=cE85LytjcFdWcnhpMU40K3V0L0N3UT09
Meeting ID: 927 9178 2101 Passcode: 836662

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm. Present from the Planning Commission were Jackson Evans, Paul Kendall and Malcolm FitzPatrick. Nathan Cleveland and Jennifer Phipps were absent. Lou Helmuth joined in person from the public and Sandy Vondrasek, Braintree's TRORC Representative joined virtually. Also in attendance in person from TRORC were Kyle Katz and Kyle Jansen, who would present on Act 181 Regional Land Use Changes.

During public comment, Lou Helmuth, speaking as a resident of Braintree and not as a member of the Selectboard, noted that he had shared a letter with the Planning Commission stating his opposition to the 1 acre subdivision proposed in the Zoning Bylaw. He also noted that he had shared comments on Sections 5 & 6 of the Zoning Bylaw. The Planning Commission thanked Lou for his input and stated that they will include a review of his submissions at a subsequent meeting.

The minutes from the March 20th meeting were approved as written following a motion from Paul Kendall and a second from Malcolm FitzPatrick. Paul and Malcolm both voted in favor of approving the minutes, and Jackson abstained as he was not present at the meeting.

Next, the meeting was turned over to Kyle K and Kyle J for their presentation on Act 181 Regional Land Use Mapping and the changes that this mapping effort represents as it relates to

Act 250. The presentation went through the timeline for how these changes and the maps created would be reviewed and adopted, ending with final adoption in December 2026. The changes will result in expanded village areas and the creation of three rural areas. The regional mapping effort will identify and expand existing and new areas for increased housing density, predominantly in Downtowns and Village Centers. The State of Vemront has set targets for expanded housing, and the regional planning commissions have worked to disaggregate those targets across the towns in their regions. For Braintree, this means that an additional 40 - 50 new housing units will need to be created, with 50% of those being located within the identified Village Centers. In Braintree, TRORC has identified two Village Centers, one in West Braintree and one in so-called South Braintree. The Planning Commission explained that the Town would also like to seek Village Center Designation for East Briantree, which the new maps did not include as a Village Center. Kyle and Kyle will add this to the maps.

The other area that has changed with Act 181 and the regional land use mapping effort is to create three land use areas in the rural parts of Vermont, where previously there were two. Those new areas are Rural General, Rural Ag/Forestry and Rural Conservation. These areas were mapped in Braintree by considering factors such as parcel size, current use or conservation enrollment, presence of high-priority forest blocks or large wetlands.

Following the presentation and a review of the draft maps, there was general discussion about the maps. The Planning Commission felt that the mapping was in keeping with the goals and policies of the Town Plan and lined up well with the Land Use maps adopted with the Town Plan. Paul Kendall noted his concern that the Rural Ag/Forestry lands would face the most pressure of development and asked Kyle about the “Road Rule” in Act 181. Kyle noted that

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Braintree could pass its own local ordinance to prevent parcel fragmentation and to limit the length and location of access roads. He suggested that this could be accomplished in the subdivision process and Paul asked for examples of successful subdivisions standard from other towns that the Planning Commission could use as reference. Sandy Vondresek commented that with Vermont's aging population, there will be a large number of homes that could be available in the next several years. She wondered if the state had factored an aging demographic into its supply and demand equation. She also echoed Paul's comments that the rural ag/forestry areas would be under the greeted development pressure.

The Planning Commission thanked Kyle and Kyle for their presentation and asked to see neighboring town's maps as they become more finalized.

Moving back to the agenda, the Planning Commission took up an article to recommend that the Braintree Selectboard pursue Village Center Designation for Snowsville. Paul moved that "The Planning Commission recommends that the Selectboard begin the formal process of applying for Village Center Designation for Snowsville. This recommendation is in line with the Policies and Actions listed in the Town Plan, adopted September 5, 2023, sections 3.6.2 (Policy #2), 3.7.2 (Action #2)." Malcolm seconded the motion. There was no discussion offered and the article was approved with Paul and Malcolm voting in favor and Jackson Evans abstaining.

Next the Planning Commission made plans for the May meeting that will include review of the Driveway section of the bylaw and a review of Lou Helmuth's comments regarding 1 acre subdivision and Sections 5 & 6 of the By Law.

With no additional business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10. The next Planning Commission Meeting is May 15th at 7pm at the Braintree Town Office.

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Respectfully submitted,

Jackson Evans

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