

**Town of Bennington
Planning Commission**

Tuesday, August 12, 2014

5:15 p.m.

Town of Bennington Conference Room

205 South Street

Bennington, Vermont 05201

MINUTES

Members Present: Barry Horst, Ken Swierad, Charles Copp

Also Present: Tim Morrissey, Peter Cross, Mary Morrissey, Deborah Morrissey, Don Miller, Judith Fellows Miller, Kathleen Hoisington, Becky Amos, Dan Amidon, Bill Colvin, Dan Monks, Shelly Stiles

Meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m.

Presentation on Ash Trees and Emerald Ash Borer: Shelly Stiles from the Bennington County Conservation District presented information to the Planning Commission regarding the impending arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer. The Ash Borer attacks Ash trees and over time kills the trees. When an infestation occurs, almost all Ash trees in the entire area die. There is currently no way to stop an Ash Borer infestation. She advised that communities should prepare a plan to deal with the removal of dead Ash trees. The Planning Commission and citizens at the meeting asked several questions and the Planning Commission thanked Shelly for providing information regarding the Ash Borer.

Draft Housing Study: Bill Colvin, BCRC, discussed the process used to develop the draft Housing Study. He explained that the Planning Commission's comments were now being sought. The Planning Commission asked citizens present at the meeting to provide comments on the draft Housing Study. The Planning Commission explained that after the Planning Commission reviewed the study and suggested changes were made, it could be submitted to the Select Board for review and comment and possible adoption. When the study is submitted to the Select Board, the Select Board will determine what process to employ in its review of the draft study. Several citizens commented on the draft plan and asked questions. Among the issues discussed: the desire for the study to provide more data regarding rental occupancy rates; the importance of education to the overall economic health of the community, the suggestion that housing should not be a top priority of the Select Board, the desire to have up to the minute data; the importance of other economic development efforts; the appearance of a conflict of interest on the advisory committee for the study; whether or not encouraging those who work in the community to live in the community was a good idea; the use of focus groups; etc. The Planning Commission thanked everyone for their comments and explained that the Planning Commission will complete its review of the draft study, make changes to the draft and then submit it to the Select Board within the next several weeks.

Municipal Planning Grant Opportunity: Bill Colvin, BCRC, reviewed his previous presentation to the Planning Commission regarding an opportunity for the Town to apply for a \$20,000 Municipal Planning Grant to leverage approximately \$43,000 in EPA funding to do an area wide plan for downtown Bennington. He also presented a draft Scope of Work for the project. The Planning Commission, by consensus, approved the draft Scope of Work and agreed to move forward with the preparation of an application for the project. Bill Colvin and the Planning Director will present the grant opportunity to the Select Board in the next few weeks to seek the Select Board's approval of the grant application.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Daniel W. Monks
Planning Director