

SOUTH HERO PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

December 4, 2024

Members Present: Dave Roy (Chair); Don Bedard (Vice-Chair); Michele Gammal; Joan Falcao

Member Absent: Brooke Scott

Others Present: Peter Zamore (Chair, South Hero Wastewater Committee); Tim Maxham; Shaun Coleman (NRPC, via Zoom); Emily Hackett (Environmental Engineer, VT DEC, via Zoom); Martha Taylor-Varney (ZA)

6:00 PM – **D. Roy** called the meeting to order.

Changes to the Agenda

Flip 'A' and 'B' of Old Business.

Public Comment

Shaun Coleman, Sr. Planner with Northwest Regional Planning Commission, told the Commission that NRPC was awarded a grant to help update South Hero's Hazard Mitigation Plan, last updated in 2018. FEMA now requires each Town to appoint a committee to work on this. The Planning Commission's time can now count toward the Town's match on the grant. Towns that have a hazard mitigation plan get a reduced match for any emergency repairs during a federally declared disaster. NRPC will update the Commission once a month during the process. The first meeting for the committee will be January 9th.

Old Business

- A. Emily Hackett** joined the meeting via Zoom to answer questions about the recent proposal to purchase approx. 100 acres of the Lavin parcel to access the available septic on the property. ARPA provided the funds to purchase the property. The Town will own any system that is built, and it will probably be a mound system. ARPA funds can also cover planning but not construction. There are other opportunities for funding construction. Will there be any restrictions for the use of the land other than for septic? Peter Zamore responded that the Town could sell some of the property, but the proceeds must support the septic project. Can it be sold to a developer? Too soon to know. Any proposal will have to go before the Development Review Board. Other Towns in Vermont that have projects similar to this are Montgomery, Wolcott, Highgate, Londonderry, Waitsfield, Warren, Rochester, and West Burke. Only communities with Designated Village Centers can qualify for the funding, and each town will operate and manage their systems. It will be up to South Hero to decide its priorities, i.e. who can connect to the system. The distance will impact the costs of installing infrastructure. The septic on the Lavin

parcel is several hundred yards from RT 2. Emily complimented the Town wastewater committee and the thoroughness of their process.

- B.** Peter Zamore gave the Planning Commission members some background on the work of the wastewater committee. In 2021, they were asked to define target areas for wastewater service. They focused on the two villages (South Hero and Keeler Bay) and a small buffer around each. Otter Creek Engineering was hired to assist the committee's work. A State Revolving Fund grant of \$95,000 helped pay for this. The committee sent surveys to residents in the two target areas to better understand their wastewater needs. Under 25% felt they would benefit from a community system. Eleven areas were identified as possible disposal areas and test pits were dug on 5 parcels. Allenholm was the only location with adequate soils but issues with the Land Trust and the size/shape of the available area, in addition to the distance from the village may it not be feasible. The Lavin parcel already had identified septic capacity, and the Town has entered into an agreement to purchase the parcel for \$750,000 if it meets all conditions of sale. Additional test pits are scheduled to be dug on December 5th. If acquired, the Town will need more funding for additional development – perhaps a Northern Borders grant? The second phase would be design, and the third phase construction.

The property has both environmental importance as well as possibilities for economic development, including housing in the village area. When the property was originally subdivided, wastewater for housing lots was initially intended. The subdivision has been amended several times since then, and there is no comprehensive plan at this time. Any plan will need to be comprehensive and cost-effective, with no piecemeal development. The Town's purchase of the property would also include Lot 1, which has frontage on RT 2. Since the lots closer to RT 2 will be developed first, who is paying for the infrastructure from there to the septic hundreds of yards away? Peter Zamore said that there is no answer to that right now. Tim Maxham said that there needs to be a plan for more than 3 lots' needs. Should the current lot configuration be changed to allow for a straighter road for the utility and road easement (a shorter distance to the septic area than the current route turning at lot 5 and going along the east boundary of the parcel)? Do wetlands need to be delineated? There are too many unknowns before the infrastructure can go in.

- C.** Continue discussion on South St. Multi-Modal Path – **D. Roy** felt that the proposed multi-modal path on South St. should follow the recommendations of the SHORE report. This would direct traffic on the path to be southbound. **D. Roy** will reach out to Andy Julow. There was additional discussion about needs for plowing any future path.

Approve Minutes

M. Gammal moved to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2024 Planning Commission meeting; **J. Falcao** second. All in favor.

Administrator’s Report

1. NRPC has published the Housing Dashboard for their region. This map shows the location of all new housing units built from 2020-2023. It will be updated annually.
2. VT Housing and Community Development, through their Vermont Housing Needs Assessment, estimated that between 4800 and 7200 housing units per year need to be added to meet the housing goals of the State. The average now is 2400/year.
3. Municipal grant applications ar now open for 2025. The deadline for applications is March 31.

There was additional discussion on short-term rentals and how they are limiting housing options. **D. Roy** asked how many there are in South Hero. Martha Taylor-Varney told the Commission that the Town has no STR registry, so no way of knowing.

Announcements

- a. No update from the White Meeting House Committee.
- b. Town Office Committee – There was discussion about the number of accesses to RT 2 there will be at the new office location. The Commission preferred there be more than one.

Next Meeting

December 18, 2024 at 6PM at the Town Office.

Adjournment

7:41PM -- **Don Bedard** moved to adjourn; **J. Falcao** second. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Taylor-Varney, ZA

Signed: _____ Date: _____

For the Planning Commission

These minutes are unofficial until approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting. All motions were unanimous unless otherwise indicated.