

SOUTH HERO PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

February 5, 2025

Members Present: David Roy (Chair); Michele Gammal; Brooke Scott; Joan Falcao

Member Absent: Don Bedard (Vice-Chair)

Others Present: Catherine Dimitruk (Northwest Regional Planning Commission); Bob Buermann; Andy Chevrefils; Mike Gammal; Chris Antonicci; Martha Taylor-Varney (ZA).

6:01PM – **D. Roy** called the meeting to order, and the Board introduced themselves.

Public Comment

Mike Gammal asked the Commission to clarify the regulations related to building height. Lots 6 and 7 on his PUD in Keeler Bay Village were approved by the DRB with a condition that the homes built on those lots do not exceed a height of 25 feet. Section 206.B (Measuring Height) and Figure 2.1 (Measuring Height) on page 11 note “average natural grade”. The definition of average natural grade in Article 10, on page 106, defines it as the “average of the highest and lowest pre-construction elevation of the land adjacent to the structure.” Mr. Gammal’s question is what is “average natural grade”? Also, how to define “pre-construction grade”? There is a home on Lot 6 but he would like clarification before selling Lot 7.

New Business

Catherine Dimitruk, executive director of Northwest Regional Planning Commission, met with the Commission members to explain changes and updates to Vermont’s land use planning regulations, called Act 181. These include new frameworks for regional planning and changes to State designations, in addition to the current Act 250 exemptions, new requirements for local and regional plans, NRPC’s mapping process, South Hero housing targets, and future land use targets. The targets will be categorized into ‘tier’ systems around village centers. Current interim maps for Act 250 exemptions only include parcels of at least 10 acres that are within the current South Hero and Keeler Bay village center designations, plus surrounding areas within ¼ mile from those centers. This will not affect most of the Town. A detailed explanation of Act 181 is included as an attachment to the minutes posted on the Town website.

Catherine asked the Commission to assist NRPC in developing future land use maps for South Hero. **M. Gammal** said that she would like to know what parcels would qualify for exemptions before meeting next with NRPC. The Commission will continue this discussion and plan to meet again with Catherine at a later meeting.

Old Business

- a. **Septic:** There was discussion about wastewater spray systems. The Commission wondered how widespread this system is in Vermont. Currently, the only one they are aware of operates in Alburgh.
- b. **South St. Multi-Modal Path:** Guy McGuire of the South Hero Land Trust will attend the next PC meeting to discuss working together on an aspect of this project.

Approve Meeting Minutes

J. Falcao moved to approve the minutes of February 5, 2025; **M. Gammal** second. All in favor.

Administrator’s Report

1. The next meeting of the Hazard Mitigation Plan Committee will be on February 13, 2025 at 11AM at the Town Office. David Roy is the PC’s representative on this committee.
2. 2025 Municipal Planning Grant applications are due March 31, 2025. The PC has no plan to apply this year.
3. Martha is sending a list of the number and type of 2024 building permits for housing that were issued in South Hero to NRPC for their housing dashboard. These are due by the end of February.

Announcements

- a. **Meeting House** – No report, at this time. The committee meets next on February 6.
- b. **Town Office Committee** – The Town Office Committee held a public meeting at the Town Office on Tuesday, February 7. A bond article for a new Town Office will be on the ballot at Town Meeting.

Next Meeting

The next Planning Commission meeting is February 19, 2025 at 6PM at the Town Office.

Additional Discussion

Referencing public comment (above) about measuring the height of a structure -- The Commission agreed that more than 2 points should be used to interpolate the height of a structure that is built on a slope, rather than the calculations as shown in Figure 2.1 on page 11 of the Development Regulations. **D. Roy** stated that “natural grade” is the grade of the land before any excavation or site work. What is the definition of “pre-construction grade” (as found in the definition of ‘average natural grade’ in Article 10)? This discussion will continue.

Adjournment

8:03PM -- **J. Falcao** moved to adjourn; **B. Scott** 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.