

**Minutes Rochester Planning Commission – September 2, 2025**  
**Rochester Town Office and via Zoom**

**Present:** Dan McKinley (Zoom), Sandy Haas, Greg White, Dave Curtis, Julie Martin

**Guests:** Brian Shebario, Nancy Vadnais, Bruce Jones, Lori Church, Deb Moore, Tara Murray, Jannah Murray, Deb Scherer, Sharon Solomon (Zoom) and Regina Cahill (Zoom)

**Call to Order:** Dan McKinley called meeting to order at 6:30pm

## 1. Subdivision Reviews

- Nancy Vadnais – Pre-Subdivision (Sketch Plan) Review
  - Location: Maple Hill Road.
  - Survey must be resubmitted on a larger plot plan and updated to include required information.
  - Action: If updated plan is submitted by 9/8, Sandy will warn the subdivision for review and approval at the 10/6 PC meeting.
- Brian Shebario – Pre-Subdivision (Sketch Plan) Review
  - Location: Campbell Road.
  - PC answered questions regarding survey requirements and necessary documentation.
- Katrina Gendron – Proposed Subdivision
  - Location: Wing Farm Road
  - Concern: Deeded ROWs for access are 16.5 feet wide (Forest Service ROW and Harrison Property ROW), which do not meet the 30-foot requirement.
  - Action: No decision required at this time. PC to consider whether a waiver may be appropriate when application is reconsidered.

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## 2. Zoning Administrator (ZA) Report – Building & Zoning Applications (Patty Harvey)

- Daniel Ward and Lizzy Shackleford Property (219 Saw Mill Road) – Potential Subdivision and drive way cut for new home. Reviewed by ZA for compliance no action required at this time.
- Mary Fratini (970 Rte 100 North) Solar Project – Approved by state. For informational purposes no action required.
- Ben Faulk (224 Fiske Road) Logging & Pond Project – Reviewed by ZA for compliance no action required.
- Brian Boch (240 Town Line Road) – Application received for new house and approved.
- Brian Shebario (162 Campbell Hill Road) – Application received for new outbuilding. ZA will advise property owner to maintain setbacks relative to proposed new subdivision line.
- Jerod Meyer (Business in Rochester Café Complex, Main Street/Route 100) – Application for two signs approved.

- Harland Houghton (11 Overlook Drive) – Application received for new garage. Reviewed by ZA and setbacks were not in compliance. Question remains regarding what zoning district it is in; ZA will conduct site visit to verify.
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### 3. Vertex Cell Tower Application – 1030 Route 100 South

Discussion led by Dan McKinley with participation from the Planning Commission (PC) and members of the public.

- Meeting Decorum
  - Emphasis placed on respectful dialogue, listening to differing opinions, and allowing all viewpoints to be heard.
- Public Concerns and Clarifications
  - Dan McKinley addressed misinformation circulating on social media and clarified the PC's position on the following issues:

#### *Flood Threat from Runoff*

- Initial runoff calculations overstated the project's impact due to a math error.
- Corrected analysis (by Dan McKinley and Ben Faulk) shows the project would contribute only a minimal increase in runoff compared to the overall drainage area.
- PC Consensus is the project would have a negligible effect on downstream flooding.

#### *Fluvial Erosion*

- The PC has expressed concerns regarding the road design, surface permeability of both the road and tower site, and potential impacts on erosion.
- Recommend a complete stormwater runoff analysis should be performed.

#### *Zoning District Clarification*

- Clarified the tower site is located in the Conservation/Agriculture District, not within the village.

#### *Vertex Balloon Test (Aesthetics)*

- Vertex's balloon test results indicated visibility from 4 out of 20 selected sites chosen by Vertex.
- Clarified the PC agrees that this assessment does not represent and understates all the locations where the tower would be visible.

#### *Project Review and Compliance with Town Plan*

- Reiterated that the PC is doing an extensive review of the project in the context of compliance with applicable sections of the Town Plan. As evidenced by the PC meeting Minutes of August 5<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and the Advance Notice comment letter sent by the PC to Vertex, PUC and various State Agencies.

#### *Opportunity for Public Comment*

- Described the process and stages for providing comments to the PUC including the current Advanced Notice Phase and the 30 day comment period after Vertex has made their Application and it has been accepted by the PUC.
- Described how the Public input that has been collected through public meetings and letters to the PC and selectboard will be taken into consideration in developing the PC comments to the PUC during the 30 day comment period.
- Actions:
  - Dan McKinley will lead effort to review all letters received from the public with help from other PC members and organize and collate comments from the public for review and input into the PC submittal to the PUC as part of the 30-day comment period.
  - Dan McKinley will coordinate with selectboard to ensure any letters and comments received by selectboard are included.
  - PC will work with town attorney through the quasi-judicial process to avoid missteps
  - PC will reach out to Vermont League of Cities and Towns as a resource for advice.
  - Next meeting scheduled for September 17<sup>th</sup> to begin drafting comments

#### 4. Review of Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission Draft Regional Future Land Use map.

- Tabled due to time constraints.

#### 5. Approve Meeting Minutes from previous meetings

- August 5 - Approved as Submitted
- August 13 - Approved as Amended (Corrected the pipe size from 28' to 28" in the Wetland discussion.)
- August 19 – Approved as Submitted

#### 6. Public Comment

- Deb Moore - Clarified the language on the petition and that it had been forwarded to the PC, selectboard, as well as Charlie and Julie Martin.
- Tara Murray - Tara noted that even though the additional runoff along the road is only 4 times what there is now it could still create more severe localized erosion issues. She also discussed how the Vortex characterization that the tower is only visible from 4 locations out of 20 sites they checked was misleading. Her own analysis, as well as others, indicate the tower will be visible from multiple locations in town including several locations along rte 100 starting near Sky Hallow Road, through the village, to south of the school parking lot. This is very concerning to her because she believes it will

have undo adverse impact on the rural and scenic nature of the village. She also stated she disagrees with the PC omitting reference to the rte. 100 Scenic Byway when commenting on aesthetics in our advanced notice comments to the PUC. Also, from her research cell tower permits have been denied where towns have come out strongly that the proposed cell tower does not comply with their town plan.

- Jannah Murray – Expressed her concern and frustration with a PC member's attitude and demeanor during the public comment session. She felt they could exhibit more patience and be more respectful. She felt as a public official they need to be held to a higher standard.
- It should be noted that all three residents who spoke expressed their appreciation to the PC in actively addressing this project and working through the issues.

Meeting was adjourned at 8 :30 PM

Next Meeting September 17, 6:30 PM