

**Town of Warren
Planning Commission
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, July 10, 2023**

Members Present: Camilla Behn (Vice Chair), Jenny Faillace, Macon Phillips, Dan Raddock (Chair), Jim Sanford, Adam Zaikowski.

Staff Present: Ruth Robbins, Zoning Administrator, Carol Chamberlin (Recording Secretary, online)

Others Present: Alice Cheney, Misha Golfman (MRPA), Lisa Miserendino

Agenda:

1. Public Comment
2. Misha Golfman, Mad River Path Association Executive Director
3. Priority Subcommittee Reports
4. New and Other Business

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

Public Comment

Nobody requested time to address the PC.

Misha Golfman

Misha introduced himself, and spoke of his relationship with Vermont and his vision for engaging in the task of creating a fully accessible alternative transportation route parallel to Route 100 from Warren to Moretown. He explained that CVRPC will help with a grant application for completion of a scoping study.

There was some discussion regarding the proposed route's connections to other paths, with Misha confirming that some of this route will follow existing Path sections. Misha stressed that accessibility for all users is a primary focus, and acknowledged that this will be a lengthy process, but one that will precipitate a change in local transportation culture. He explained that he is currently seeking broad support for the planned scoping study, and PC members expressed their enthusiasm for the project in general.

Reports from priority subcommittees

Dan reviewed the information he had provided regarding short-term rentals (attached). There was some discussion regarding whether this issue is best addressed at a town level or through the MRVPD, where some preliminary consideration has taken place in recent months. Points raised to be considered included:

- The need for an accurate inventory
 - Owner-occupied, owner-occupied part time, not owner-occupied
- Compliance with health, safety, and financial obligations
- Use of a management company for inventory, compliance
- Regulatory possibilities
 - Investigate if STRs can be addressed by zoning district
 - Town better than MRVPD for looking at regulations
- Effects on affordable housing

Dan will look into gathering the related data that has been collected by MRVPD.

Jim presented the statements he had composed regarding a Town Vision and the Town Garage.

For Town Visioning , he proposed a committee that will collect information from previous pertinent work, and present that to the full PC. Jim noted that the scope would likely broaden to include the current garage site, enabling the PC to provide information to help the Town move forward in a coherent direction.

Jim explained that he sees a Town Garage committee serving as an aid to the Selectboard, the degree of PC involvement determined after conversation with the Board. It was agreed that, regardless of the level of detailed involvement, the PC should be kept in the loop as decisions regarding the garage are made, and there was full support expressed for the PC assisting in pursuing any location options outside of the Village.

Macon provided the plan he had outlined related to Affordable Housing (attached). It was confirmed that he had not collaborated with Jenny in composing the plan, but she indicated her agreement with what he had written. They agreed to provide a more concise statement at the next meeting.

Macon had also composed a statement regarding Communications, but as he had not yet met with Camilla to review the topic together, it was decided to wait until the next meeting to review this as a full PC.

Dan reiterated that the goal of the summaries from each subcommittee is for presentation to the Selectboard for approval on which areas should be delved into by the PC.

Mike asked to be added to the town garage and town visioning subcommittees.

New and Other Business

Minutes were signed.

Camilla provided an update on Selectboard progress on LUDR review, explaining that the Board is currently reviewing Chapter 3, and will be meeting on July 18 specifically to address the LUDRs.

Macon had some questions regarding where to find relevant housing data, and Ruth and Dan provided some information. Jenny asked about village wastewater connections; Camilla explained that she and others are working to put that information together.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary

Planning Commission

Jim Sanford date

Camilla Behn date

Jenny Faillace date

Dan Raddock date

Michael Bridgewater date

Macon Phillips date

Adam Zawistowski date

Priority: Develop plan for understanding impact of short-term rentals and working towards registration and potentially regulation of short-term rentals.

Statement of Issue: Given the rise in popularity of online platforms like Airbnb and HomeAway/VRBO, many communities have begun to examine the economic and social impacts of short-term rentals. The Town of Warren has a long history of renting homes to the vacationing public. However, the growth of STRs within the past decade may necessitate action by the Town of Warren.

Pros of STRs: STRs provide owners with the opportunity to earn income; in some cases, this additional source of income can help subsidize a cost of living that may otherwise be challenging. They also benefit the MRV's tourism economy and provide guests with a convenient, and sometimes more affordable, place to stay when traveling.

Cons of STRs:

- Health & Safety
 - Lack of tracking and ability to enforce health & safety regulations poses risks for renters and neighbors (e.g., compliance with the VT Fire & Building Safety Code and the VT Rental Housing Health Code).
- Year-Round Housing
 - Conversion of residential units can further stress an already tight housing market by reducing availability and increasing costs of rental and ownership options. Lack of affordable housing stresses the local employment base, school enrollment, and impacts community vitality.
- Community Externalities
 - Potential impacts on neighborhoods with a high density of STRs (especially those that can accommodate large numbers of guests) include visible trash, increased traffic & parking demands, and excess noise.
 - A decline in long-term neighbors impacts neighborhood character and value, as well as general investment in the community.

State level regulation. The Vermont House and Senate passed S.79 in 2021, establishing a statewide registry of long and short-term rental units and fund health and safety enforcement. However, the bill was vetoed by the Governor on 7/2/21. The fate of such an effort in future legislative sessions is unknown.

As defined by the State of Vermont, a Short-Term Rental is "a furnished home, condominium, or other dwelling rented to the transient, traveling, or vacationing public for a period of fewer than 30 consecutive days and for more than 14 days per calendar year." 18 V.S.A. § 4301 (14).

Local regulation in VT. The approaches being utilized by communities to address STRs can broadly be categorized as: tracking, regulating, taxation, and licensing/permitting.

Municipalities have the authority to hire a compliance management company, or establish an internal registry (for example, through zoning permits). A compliance management company could reduce staff time required for registry creation, management, and enforcement; while this is the more costly option, one example of pricing for the three towns came out to an annual fee of approximately \$40 for STR-owners.

Discuss with SBoard: Should the PC move forward, independently of the MRVPD, to propose steps such as tracking or a registry to better understand the STR issues in Warren. Given Sbrush's location in Warren, and all the condo development on the mountain, does Warren require a unique solution or can it be part of a Valley wide solution? What is MRVPD timeline?

Resources: <https://mrvpd.org/2022/12/12/2022-mrv-short-term-rental-survey-results/>

Develop Affordable Housing Plan

Description

An affordable housing plan will produce quality housing that is accessible to a wide range of residents, including seniors, low-income households, and employees of local businesses.

Establish a common definition of "affordable housing."

Establish baseline data, historic performance and future goals.

Evaluate Town Policies and Processes

Revise Permit Fee Structure: Consider revising the permit fee structure to reduce costs for affordable and/or small footprint housing and increase costs for high cost and/or large footprint housing.

Utilize town owned land for affordable housing. Publish a map of potential sites.

Create an Affordable Housing Fund

Update Land Use and Development Regulations

Identify public and private partners & initiatives (Downstreet, Sugarbush, MRV Planning, State & Federal)