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CORNWALL PLANNING COMMISSION (CPC)

Public Hearing
Cornwall Town Hall and via Teleconference
January 18, 2023, 7 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Don Burns, Drew Kervick, Katherine Branch, Marge Drexler, Lauren Ringey

ALSO PRESENT: Annie Wilson, Gail Isenberg, Marc Lapan, Mary Dodge, Meg Harris, Raph Worrick, Andrew Menkart, Stan Grzyb, Andrea Landsberg, Woody Jackson, Jean Terwilliger, Ben Marks.

This hearing was duly warned, copies of the latest draft of the Cornwall Town Plan 2022-2027 are available at the Town Hall and a link to the Town Plan is available on the Town website. Access to this hearing is available via Zoom. Jordan and Marje Young are managing the Zoom access.

The hearing was opened at 7 pm by Don Burns.

Don B. presented an overview of the work done by the Planning Commission in the last two years to update the Town Plan. Don explained that this is not an update of the entire Plan, but limited in scope. This update focused on the addition of two sections that the State now requires in Town Plans - Flood Resilience and Forest Integrity, as well as work to bring statistical information up to date and to provide updated maps. The Planning Commission intends to revisit the Town Plan in the near future for further updating in concordance with updating Town regulations.

Don B. said that the purpose of this hearing is for the Planning Commission to listen. In addition to hearing from those present tonight, the Commission will accept written comments. Don then opened up the floor for comments and questions from the citizens present at the Town Hall and attending via Zoom.

Stan Grzyb introduced himself as as a Cornwall resident and also one of Cornwall's representatives to the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC). He stressed the importance of keeping the following statements in the Town Plan:

1. On page 129 (Plan Implementation section): "Action 3: Investigate Village Center Designation application for Cornwall Village and West Cornwall."
2. On page 122 (Community Facilities and Services goals): "Support future projects to construct, rehabilitate and maintain Cornwall's public buildings and facilities that are energy efficient, are cost-effective to taxpayers, preserve their historic character, promote the viability of the village center and conform to the goals of this plan."

Stan said that once Select Board accepts the Town Plan, it goes to the ACRPC for approval. If approved by the ACRPC, then the Town may apply for a Village Center Designation. If Cornwall is given a Village Center Designation, the Town would then be eligible for grants that are only available to towns with either a Downtown or Village Center designation.

Andrea Landsberg introduced herself as a Cornwall resident and member of the Conservation Commission. She recommended that instead of the term “wildlife corridor” the term “habitat connector” be used in the Town Plan, because plants, insects, and microbial species need to have habitats connected just as much as animals do. Andrea suggested that using the term “habitat connector” is especially important in the goals and actions section.

Andrew Menkart - introduced himself as a resident of Cornwall, and said that the Town Plan is an impressive document. He thinks that both the intent and the implementation of this Plan is what the citizens of Cornwall need and want. He recognized the Planning Commissioners and appreciates all the work that went into it.

Mary Dodge - a resident of Cornwall, Mary thanked the CPC for all the work they have done in the past two years on the Town Plan. She would first like to speak on behalf of the Conservation Commission (CCC) in their objection to the concept of forest blocks and connectors as describing the landscape in Cornwall and that there is new mapping coming out with the newest and most accurate data. The CCC recommends that the Town Plan include a goal that maps will be updated as new data becomes available, and if new data is available now, another map with this new data be added at this time to the Plan.

Jean Terwilliger - Jean introduced herself as a Cornwall resident and former member of the Planning Commission. She expressed her appreciation for all the work that the CPC has done. She asked if consideration was given to the issue of short term rental housing in the Housing section or strengthening language in the Energy section to address climate change. Drew K. replied that this update had to be limited in focus to updating statistics. Don B. added that the CPC will be working on a subsequent update to the Town Plan when it works on updating Town regulations. The CPC does not plan on waiting 8 years to do the next Town Plan update.

Marc Lapan - introduced himself as a resident of Cornwall and a previous member of the Conservation Commission. Marc praised the “phenomenal work” done on the Town Plan. He spoke about some of his more substantive comments at the meeting, and provided a written two page document with numerous specific comments, including the relevant page numbers. Marc’s comments included grammatical changes, suggesting clearer and more accurate language, and suggesting stronger language, for example, when talking about the forest patches seen in photos from 1942, to indicate their ecological importance. Regarding the relevancy of State maps showing priority blocks, Marc asked the Planning Commission, “Do you want to look at the State level priority blocks or at the local level forest habitat?” Referring to the issue that Jean Terwilliger

brought up, Marc also recommends that the Town Plan include a goal to study short term rental housing in Cornwall.

Mary Dodge - speaking as an individual resident, said that she found 8 maps in the Town Plan are badly out of date or misleading. For example, the Wildlife Crossing map is based on 2 year old data. All the lands in Cornwall that have been conserved are not on the maps yet. She would like to see a continual renewal of maps as new data comes out.

Raph Worrick - spoke to the difficulty of building affordable housing in Cornwall. Neighbors protest and then affordable housing projects get shut down. Raef added that the Town has a poor record of enforcement of Town regulations.

Ben Marks - said that he is very impressed by the amount of thought and care that the Planning Commission has devoted in its work on this update.

The Planning Commission members thanked the citizens for their participation in this hearing. All the comments received tonight and in writing will be reviewed and discussed, and changes made to the document as appropriate, before the document is submitted to the Select Board for their review and hearing.

The hearing was closed at 8:10 pm.

submitted by Sharon Tierra, Secretary of the Select Board