

Shaftsbury Planning Commission
April 25, 2017

- 1) The meeting came to order at 7:03 p.m. Present were commission members Chris Williams, chair, Michael Foley, and Michael Cichanowski. Tim Scoggins, select board chair, was present, as was zoning administrator Shelly Stiles.

- 2) There were no minutes to approve.

- 3) Reviving a country store:

Mr. Scoggins reported he hoped the Town could grease the skids to facilitate the reopening of a country store in town.

Mr. Williams reported on several "case studies" he'd explored.

The Poultney store was in the end rebuilt after two fires by contributions from 400 townsfolk. The building, but not the business, was purchased by the Putney Historical Society. Chris was impressed that the store now includes a pharmacy (the nearest one otherwise is about 10 miles away in B'boro). Local goods and a great deli seem to account for its success. Preservation Trust of VT and VT Housing and Conservation Board participated in its restoration.

In Peru, the Bromley Market, which has tables, was packed at lunch hour on a Wednesday afternoon. Lots of local stuff, prepared foods, wines, gluten free products. JJ Hapgood store, off Rt. 11, was recently renovated and appears to be nearly a restaurant, with lots of local clientele. BCRC was involved in Hapgood restoration

Hancock, VT: strictly an entrepreneurial effort, which seems to be successful.

D&K Grocery in Jamaica is phenomenally successful, deli and cooked foods a major component.

Cummings in Glover in the NEK focuses on taxidermy (sic).

General Store in E. Burke seems to be sustained by mountain bikers. Sells deli goods, T shirts, beer.

Warren, on a tourist route, plays the local brewery tune hard.

Local breweries seem to play a big role in the northern part of the state. Local goods generally a draw.

Possible resources: Association of VT General Stores, a guide to VT general stores.

No one seems to survive on selling general merchandise. Local a draw. Stores must be able to survive shoulder seasons – with support of locals.

Mr. Scoggins said the Town would be unlikely to support buying a building for a store. Instead, he imagines the Town identifying sites, putting together information on funding, doing marketing studies, etc.

Good sites in Shaftsbury? One plus with the existing country store is the two apartments above. The building across Rt. 7 owned by Peter Cross has possibilities. (Best explore septic potential, which could be a deal breaker.) The MSK building near the PO. Part of the Eagle Square building – a mixed use situation with industry elsewhere on the lot.

Mr. Foley asked: how much extra money is there in Shaftsbury? We already support Paulins and the Market Wagon. Why not support food trucks? And what makes a country store successful? Tables?

Mr. Cichanowski said he might be willing to do a feasibility study.

It was noted that we have some local basics in Clearbrook, Mighty Food, the cookie store, Thyme Tables.

- 4) Iron Kettle Motel and workforce housing

ZA Stiles reported, second hand, what the owner of the Motel told Art Whitman and David Kiernan last week.

Mr. Williams suggested we meet with the owner and ask them what we can do to help them succeed. If indeed rental housing for the Peckham workforce is a limiting factor for that business, the proposed Shires Housing development near the N. Bennington line (24 units in phase 2) could help. We should ask Peckham and TAM, where are they going, where are they growing, what do you need? Mr. Williams will reach out to Brian Lent and Trevor Mance.

Mr. Williams suggested the Town should support Shires Housing in its efforts in Shaftsbury. It could incorporate affordable housing in the zoning bylaw (by offering a density bonus, for example). He said building affordable housing could be a growth industry in town, and meet an unmet need.

5) Trails and economic development

Mr. Scoggins reported that, with Jonah Spivak, a trails page has been put up on the Chamber of Commerce website. Vermont has a trails site, but there are no Bennington County trails on the website. (We will need to add them.)

It was agreed that the PC would gather information on existing publicly accessible trails and old roads in Shaftsbury and connecting communities, reach out to property owners, think about creating a trail maintainers group, and so on.

6) The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m. The next meeting will be held May 9.

Notes by ZA Stiles.