

Below is a letter from Jim Carrol, received by the Planning Commission on June 2, 2020. The letter is reprinted, to include responses from the Planning Commission Chair, Jason Cheney, inserted in line.

The PC Chair responses are based on the May 11, 2020 draft of amendments to the zoning regulations. As of June 9, 2020, the draft is still being worked on, and is not finalized or proposed.

Jim Carroll

To the Jericho Planning Commission,

Let me begin with "I don't know why you do what you do, it certainly is a significant labor and often I'm sure a thankless task."

PC Chair Response

As a member, and at this time the Chair, of the Planning Commission (PC) I will say that stating it to be a thankless job may be thanks enough, we do this work for the future of the town we all love. Thank you!

Would like to begin with recognition of the long road that you have traveled. I am hoping that we can together move forward on "the road less traveled".

PC Chair Response

I personally appreciate this thinking, as Chair and as a citizen. It has been a focus of the PC to break down some traditional barriers and remove the silos of governance. While I'm am certain we could do more, I too am pleased that we are striving for greater communication and better public service.

Thank you all for your patience, perseverance, creativity and what is obviously a sincere effort to improve the life quality for those who live and pass through the town of Jericho Vermont. I hope you will be able to put the comments below in the context of trying to be of value at the strategic level. After over 4 decades in Jericho and looking at newborns and 3-year-olds who hope to be able to live their lives here as well, I think there's an incredible opportunity. I think the path to the opportunity is in fact a road less traveled. I am very concerned that the reality of Vermont and Jericho specifically is a deteriorating economy, a significant erosion of affordability, a 30% shrinking of the student population in Jericho East, and seriously flawed governmental practices. To put these comments and perspective I offer that as an old man I see silos of micro-groups. However well intended they maybe they seem to have lost the bigger perspective. A strategic view is actually very brief and simple. The Jericho town plan is neither. It

in fact from a professional perspective does not provide enlightened guidance. I think there are numerous court cases which essentially says that it's not useful and can't be employed to govern development.

PC Chair Response

Noted

Having participated in all the meetings, read all the information available I candidly do not understand how we have gotten here. Jericho does not have an architect; it does not have an architectural plan that's been placed in front of the voters. Jericho does not have an economic plan, no planning or zoning documents that I have ever seen have taken into consideration the positive or negative effect on the grand list, the properties included in the proposed changes or the impacts said changes will have on them. I watched opportunity after opportunity squandered by Jericho's failure to put the horse in front of the cart. I now see an effort to draft micro-planning regulations before any of the inherent strategic issues have been addressed. Those issues have been presented from the beginning and have been for all intents and purposes ignored or worse myths spoken of.

PC Chair Response

As Chair, I will state that I have yet to see any member of the public attend all the meetings, forums and workshops that have been conducted.

The town has employed, as a consultant, a land use expert. That consultant has studied the land use potential of the current existing undeveloped Commercial District (CD). That consultant met with Landowners and Public alike to discuss uses and long-term deliverables all aimed at making the District more cohesive with the Town's needs. A Master Plan was developed and adopted. Town Plan edits were developed and adopted. And we are now engaged in zoning edits. What needs to be known is that there is not one set of documents that resides in any town, much less Jericho, that captures all the vision and all the goals while simultaneously promoting the vision and weeding out contrary elements. Our Town Plan will need constant attention and revisions. So too will our Zoning Documents, new challenges, new ideas, new technology will be forever presenting new topics for Jericho to embrace and plan for. And there are also other planning tools we have yet to use. Jericho is preparing to engage on the Official Map process for the CD. It is worth noting that in the state of Vermont there are only a handful of towns using Official Maps. The Official Map is a significant planning tool because it is aimed at defining the Vision of the CD with regards to streets, sidewalks, trails, utilities (septic, water, electricity, broadband and natural gas). The key to an Official Map is the Economic Plan and Community Consensus – all the building blocks to establishing a TIF District as mentioned below.

Almost every professional planning process from the federal to the local level speaks to the issues loudly and clearly of simple strategy, broad and open communications, combining strengths and working together. I have spoken frequently of the need to put the horse in front of the cart and to establish a TIF District.

PC Chair Response

The Horse is the Master Plan here, followed by the required adjustments to the Town Plan and the Zoning Regulations. Add the Official Map and we have a two-horse team. The Cart, the cargo, the deliverable is the potential of establishing a TIF District, this is mentioned in the Master Plan. What needs to be known is that for a Municipality to enter into a TIF agreement there needs to be a consensus between the Municipality and the Stakeholders. You might recall there was a hiatus on TIFs in VT until just recently, even then there was a hiatus on TIFs in Chittenden County. It's not a given that Jericho can even qualify for a TIF, certainly not unless there is a more cooperative atmosphere between the various factions of Jericho.

A casual read of almost any of the planning guidelines that are out there encourage the creative use of the triple PPP'S. Namely public private partnerships. It is through these tools that the combination of strength and the limitation of weakness produces the absolute best of implementations. Sadly, I have listened repeatedly as citizens have offered to participate in the triple PPP'S. What is even sadder in Jericho is that there have been significant offers of being in Quad PPPP'S. That's where you add philanthropy to the triple PPP'S.

PC Chair Response

I will repeat here the need for Cooperation. For the town of Jericho to endorse Philanthropy a cooperative will need to be developed.

I watched as @1,250,000 federal dollars were spent at the intersection of Brown's Trace and Route 15. Despite the requirement in the town plan that we are moving towards and multimodal community there were no provisions at all for any activity other than automobiles and trucks. This should go down in INFAMY as evidence of the failure of the Jericho community to work together forwards a sustainable community. I can enumerate many other examples. I would bet any taker that the Clark's and the wedding venue would have donated the necessary land to have achieved safe pedestrian access and strategic infrastructure for safety, economic development, and infrastructure. That should have been a Quad P project. It wasn't. In fact, when these opportunities were presented the individuals speaking to them were shushed and ridiculed.

PC Chair Response

I can only speak about the role of the PC here in that the PC does not have one. The PC does not solicit, purchase or manage construction (road or other) projects for the Town of Jericho. This complaint has been delivered to the PC numerous times over the last 2 years, as much as we wish we could help, aside from delivering the message to the Select board, it is not in our domain. I am sorry.

Having read through the proposed regulations I respectfully ask again that no further effort be put on the crafting of regulations until a one-page strategy is agreed to by the 4 PPPP's. The players in this collaborative effort of the Vermont agency of transportation, Champlain water District, the landowners, the Jericho Village water District, the town of Jericho/its various boards and authorities, the citizens and landowners and taxpayers.

Vision:

Jericho Vermont, an enlightened sustainable community that shows respect for peoples of all classes and means, the citizens and the property owners with no bias or preference. This community being skilled at the highest level of open communication, led to merge the strengths of all and mitigate and minimize its weaknesses. Taking stock of the positive aspects of its history, its needs, means, resources and skills to exploit technology, financing opportunities, federal and state tax credits and to do all to fill the seats of our existing schools with willing students. (Youth is draining away from Vermont and specifically from Jericho as it thinks of itself not as an integrated sustainable community but rather as a “bedroom community.”

Sadly, it seems to have taken a worldwide pandemic to show the truth. Technology is and will mitigate if not eliminate for many the burden and tedium of commutation. An enlightened town strategy should be building capacities to support those who work from home. Economies of scale off the local businesses with advanced services such as but not limited to shared resources such as 3D printing, technical specialties, advanced technologies. Many of the Companies are moving towards shrinking the corporate office footprint, building enhance security for the use of local Internet. The towns and communities of the future will be investing in a Quad P environment for this new economy. Those that don't will be like the apples left on the tree in the fall gradually turning soft rotting and falling to the ground. Those that do not innovate, work together will undoubtedly fail. This is already occurring in Jericho student population is shrinking, property taxes are going up and inherent contradictions are everywhere. Planning commission is trying to encourage through negative regulation positive of a walkable space. Yet almost every opportunity Jericho has failed to implement crosswalks, strategic easements during the process of permitting, and failed at phenomenally low interest rates to bond for the necessary infrastructure to attract and retain the next generation of residents. Regressive zoning where the parties of governance attempt to burden the property owners instead of joining hands with them in a positive mutual strength strategy and plan. This approach has and will continue to create warring silos. Pressing Pause in taking this time to change how we plan, regulate and finance the development of the essential components of life quality for the “Non-bedroom Community” that hopefully Jericho can become so as to prosper through this and into the next century.

This will take Courage, out of the box thinking, transparency, open polite and respectful debate, and open and willing leadership. I have heard time after time from the many landowners involved in this community where they are willing to be a part of the 4th P. I've heard the willingness of donation of land and easements for the betterment of the community. Unfortunately, time after time those who have offered to sacrifice or who have even sacrificed are disrespected and maligned.

Let's hope that “Mindfulness”, that is being in the now forgetting to past transgressions and working together as a community for the betterment of all. I bet that we can ZOOM through a brief transition and move towards a one-page strategy built around a Quad P mentality of an enlightened sustainable community.

With the majority of our community simultaneously concerned about the global pandemic while they learn to cope with the modern technology and telecommuting. Can participate in the creation of the guidance and leadership to ensure that Jericho can be a pillar of light and show how community can

work together.

PC Chair Response

A 4P program would demand a cohesive unit working together to form a plan, once that plan is signed off on by the public at large we could discuss how Philanthropy gets involved. To that end the Town of Jericho assembled a team of PC members; CD landowners and members of the public, called the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee was charged to interface and engage with the Land Use Consultant, the CD Landowners and the Public, all in the spirit of cooperation, transparency and open communication aimed at developing an *enlightened town strategy*. After meeting many times with landowners and public both, the vision and understanding were laid out in the Master Plan that has been the tool the PC has been using to address changes needed in the Town Plan and now with the Zoning Regulations. That same approach, open communication, transparency and cooperation will be the basis of where an Official Map will be developed. The Official map will be the “architect’s” rendition of the consensus and the Benchmark for both economic development and philanthropy in the Commercial District. We are all hearing the same thing, the need for planning is shared, it’s the steps that need to be taken and the order that they are taken that seems amiss. This is where the PC leans on the Regional Planning Commission, the State, our Professional Staff and our Hired Consultants to guide us through the steps.

Thank you for listening to a prayer for all of us In This community to learn from its mistakes, and move forward with a simple vision capitalizing on mutual strengths.