



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, September 12, 2023 at 6:30 PM

Chris Letourneau Meeting Room and via Zoom

MINUTES

Zoom Details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6165843896?pwd=STduU2JzTmpiVmE1MXZSaWZWLzVadz09>

Meeting ID: 616 584 3896 | Passcode: 5243524

Dial by your Location: 1 929 205 6099 (New York)

1. CALL TO ORDER - 6:30 PM

2. ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

BOARD PRESENT

Chair Suzanna Brown

Greg Drew

Jared Waite

Tony Heinlein

BOARD ABSENT

Emily Johnson

STAFF PRESENT

Doug Bergstrom, Zoning Administrator

Kollene Caspers, Zoning Clerk

SPECIAL GUEST

Michael Allen, ReGrowth Planning

3. DISCUSSION

A. ReGrowth Planning - Michael Allen

- Michael Allen introduction, will be representing ReGrowth for the Georgia Town Plan
- Coordination items and approach in a nutshell for the Georgia Town Plan Project:

-Start with an Open House, a public meeting, to let people know that Town of Georgia is updating the Town plan and to get some input from community members on what they think is important, what concerns do they have, how would they like to see the Town of Georgia grow?

- ReGrowth and the Planning Commission will design a survey to go out to a wider audience to touch on issues to address and encourage discourse from community members.
 - “Community Discussion” will be a large part of the Town Plan, Planning Commission will base decisions made on the wants/desires of community members.
 - Collecting data from the surveys will help to identify key topics to focus on during one or two other community meetings to discuss these issues. Together with all of the above, ReGrowth will draft a town plan, present drafts to public, revise, edit and re-present the draft Town Plan to the Planning Commission and Selectboard.
 - The Planning Commission will be the forefront committee for ReGrowth to work with. S. Brown will be main point of contact with copy email to Zoning Administrator.
 - ReGrowth will mostly meet with Planning Commission via Zoom, but once a month be in person for any public event.
- ReGrowth has reviewed the 2017 Georgia Town Plan, has toured the town, taken photos, and is setting up a dedicated website for the project. This website will be a sub-page off the ReGrowth website, and can be found by web address, QR code on advertising materials as well as a link from the Town of Georgia’s website.
 - ReGrowth will provide advertising materials and maps for this the first community public meeting, tentatively scheduled for October 24th or 25th in early afternoon to early evening. In addition to asking for discussion topics, ReGrowth will have some base maps and arial maps for basis of discussion.
 - The Planning Commission will review the 2017 Town Plan with ReGrowth on a detailed level to identify which existing plans should be carried through, scrap out-of-date or unwanted plans, and to update those plans that may need to be changed due to the growth of Georgia over the last six years.
 - ReGrowth will Zoom a coordination meeting with the Planning Commission soon to plan the public meeting in late Oct, giving 5-6 weeks to prepare agenda for the meeting and advertise to the community.
 - Options to hold the public meeting includes Firehouse, GEMS Small Gym and library. Planning Commission will look into options and follow up with availability and times. Benefit of Firehouse is a kitchen, in case we want to host snacks and drinks.
 - The initial public meeting will field questions; then ReGrowth will host one or two public meetings to draft plans and ideas for public review, and can probably get the draft completed for review by June/July 2024.

- At least two public hearings are necessary to present the draft Town Plan for review. One meeting with the Planning Commission and one or two meetings for the public at large. Selectboard can be another meeting, also open to the public.
- How do we attract people into discussion for Town Plan data collection? Ideas shared included a digital (QR code) flier for Fall fest, postings at Georgia Market, library, GEMS. Can also place sandwich boards with information out front of Town Hall, Historical society, fire department. As well as targeting some of the local favorite Facebook pages. Can also tap into existing groups like GCEC, exercise groups, any public Georgia group pages. ReGrowth can also reach out to media outlets like St. Albans Messenger, 7 Days and VT Digger for articles; as well as Front Porch Forum & LCA TV.
- Once survey questions are collated and organized, advertising will get the word out to distribute digital and paper surveys to the community. Survey will be available on the Town of Georgia website and paper copies will be available at Town Hall and Georgia Public Library, etc.
- ReGrowth will be in charge of collecting surveys, collating information and presenting end results to the public. Best overall for an impartial party. Overall they will lead the community into discussion on what the town as a whole wishes to move forward. ReGrowth will present to the town but it is up to Planning Commission to make the final decisions of what will go into the new Town Plan.
- Any developers or investors who have current sketch plans, preliminary or final plats can be invited to any of the public meetings held for the Georgia community to get their Point-of-View for how the Town Plan will effect growth in the different Zoning Districts in the Town of Georgia.
- There is a desire for economic expansion in the Town of Georgia, however it's a quagmire to getting proper permits, properly timed, and affordable for the residents. Town of Georgia's revenue generators include the Industrial Parks, the 2 wind turbines, and the Town owns one cell tower. All other town revenue relies on taxes.
- What things have changed in Georgia since the last Town Plan? Short term rentals and 2nd home rentals are becoming a problem in certain areas of Georgia.
- Permits for the largest septic system allowance are requested and builders build accordingly, so only larger homes are being built here in Georgia. Though not housing some of the people who want to stay here in town. Georgia used to be a local farming community but is becoming a bedroom community of Burlington. Some residents are clinging to the idea that it's still only rural and want to vote/regulate accordingly.
- Some residents only live in Georgia, but are invested more in the communities where they work or where their kids go to school.

- Planning Commission concern/issue is the state of Vermont requiring a ViewShed, this issue can be hot topic, discussion over "current use" (farmland, forest land, etc.) and residential areas that may burden community resources.
- How do Solar Panels work into the Town Plan? Since Solar Panel regulations are a State run initiative, it's a different consideration for the Town but should be addressed in the Town Plan. Georgia has a couple larger scale, not private, solar projects. Mill River, large parcel of prime agriculture/farmland.
- Density Max and Density Bonus discussion, in terms of new Act 47 and future of Town Plan.
- Other factors to consider include South Village master plan, sewer feasibility study, other studies for ReGrowth to review before going forward with drafting Town Plan or questioning the community members for Town Plan.
- Historic Village or Town Center designation would benefit the Town of Georgia, help us move forward with available grants. Town of Georgia would need a Village Designation in order to get grant money for things such as municipal water, municipal sewer. And another problem is not having a post office/zip code solely for Georgia, VT.
- Establishing the South Village as a new Town Center (designated growth center) in the Town Plan to get grants for infrastructure would be key. We would also need at least a plan for both municipal water and sewer systems.
- Permitting will become easier for growth/developers to develop in SV once public water is introduced.
- Discussion potential- moving Town office and Town library to SV, residents may want drive-throughs, commercial spaces, strip malls, larger community meeting spaces, etc.
- Discussion with ReGrowth on Development Regulations drafting as well as Planning and Town Plan drafting.
- ReGrowth and the Planning Commission will need to work with Regional Planning Commission to complete Town of Georgia's Town Plan.
- Data-collection versus data-gathering; will ReGrowth seek out its own data, or will they use existing data available from resources such as Regional Planning or US Census? The Planning Commission does not want to include any data that's approximated. Only data that has been independently collected from here in Georgia should be included in the Town Plan.
- Demographic info can be gathered by school data, voter data, second homeowners, etc.

- Georgia Elementary and Middle School and Franklin West Supervisory Union will have to play a part in the planning to assist in Town of Georgia growth potential and future needs.
- Layout design of Town Plan should adhere to Planning Commission and community recommendations, such as presenting the Town Plan in more of a “magazine” type format instead of “user-manual” type layouts. Appearance of the Town Plan will come later in the process after drafting has started.
- ReGrowth will start with advertising materials for Fall Fest and will work together to come up with first data collection public meeting Oct 24th or 25th. They will touch base on Oct 10th meeting for preparation for Town data gathering meeting.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Planning Meeting Minutes 8/8/2023

Reviewed Planning Meeting minutes from 8/8/2023

Motion to approve with no changes.

Motion made by Drew, Seconded by Waite.

Voting Yea: Chair Brown, Drew, Waite, Heinlein

5. PLAN NEXT MEETING AGENDA 9/26/2023

- Review and redrafting of Town of Georgia Development Regulations. Staff has started review of Definitions portion of the old development regulations.
- Anything recommended by Michael Allen for Town of Georgia Town Plan to get discussion started or initial data collection meeting information disseminated.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

- Municipal Planning Grant paperwork, signing and discussion.
- Design Regulations Grant information shared as well, Planning Commission has to identify and ask what the Town is trying to achieve, example- affordable housing, etc. Will add this to the agenda for next Planning Commission meeting.
- Motion to authorize application for Grant for drafting new Development Regulations through the State of Vermont.

Motion made by Waite, Seconded by Drew.

Voting Yea: Chair Brown, Drew, Waite, Heinlein

7. DELIBERATIONS

8. ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn meeting at 9:25 p.m.

Motion made by Drew, Seconded by Chair Brown.

Voting Yea: Chair Brown, Drew, Waite, Heinlein

Posted to the Town website, four designated places within the Town of Georgia (Town Clerk's Office, Georgia Public Library, Maplefields & Georgia Market), and e-mailed to the local media.

Signed: Douglas Bergstrom, Zoning Administrator, Planning Coordinator

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