JOINT MEETING – SELECTBOARD, PLANNING COMMISSION, DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

December 14, 2000

Members Present: Don A., Steve L., Brian G., Lee S., Paul T., Theresa B., Carol J., Stephen J., Gary N., Kelly R., Sam G., Bruce T.

GUESTS: Ken Sweetser, Heidi Krantz

Brian G. thanked everyone for attending. He stated that he welcomed the opportunity to communicate with the other boards and to strive toward being on the same wavelength.

Brian G. stated one issue to be discussed was the zoning budget. The Selectboard will be finalizing proposed budgets on 12/18/00. He stated the Selectboard noted a significant increase in the computer budget. Sam G. stated that the Planning Commission had questioned the increase in this item as well. Ken Sweetser stated he has since met with Eugene Dambach (computer specialist) and the figure has been dropped to $2,000. Brian G. stated the proposed budget includes consideration for a part time person in the zoning office. Brian stated that the Selectboard has concerns over the lack of coverage in the zoning office. Ken is currently employed for 40 hours per week. Steve L. asked how many hours the office is actually open? Ken Sweetser stated that it depends on how many night meetings he attends for various boards. Brian G. asked what hours Ken keeps when he does not have meetings? Ken stated he works 7:00AM-3:00PM if there are no meetings. Brian G. questioned if this best served the public? Ken stated that it gives him an hour before opening to the public to get caught up on paperwork and to see contractors. Steve L. stated that he thought with Heidi K. and Julia C. on board some of the workload would be shifted off Ken (groups, Selectboard issues). Julia C. introduced Heidi K. to the board members. Heidi K. gave an overview of her activities as Volunteer Coordinator. Gary N. agreed with Steve in that Heidi would absorb a lot of the group work Ken had been doing, and with the Design Charette complete he would have more time. He stated that he occasionally gets calls from permit applicants when Ken is not available. Most questions could be addressed with better directions included on permit applications. Steve L. asked Gary if he thought he received calls because Ken was unavailable, or because he is the DRB Chair? Gary N. stated it was probably some of both. Lee S. asked what takes Ken out of the office? Ken stated it could be site visits, meetings at LCPC or on State issues. Brian G. asked if the meetings he attends that take him out of the office are Town sanctioned? Ken stated that they are Town related meetings that he attends. Brian G. stated that with Heidi on board it should free up some of Ken's time. Ken agreed. Brian G. stated that he thought in funding Heidi's position the Board should wait a year and see how things work out. Bruce T. stated that it is too early to tell what impact Heidi and Julia will have on the workload. He suggested letting it ride and then see what happens. Lee suggested that there be better management of office hours. Theresa B. suggested by appointment. Stephen J. suggested that the newspaper contain continuous information about zoning office hours. Don A. stated that Ken was entitled to vacation time and that was not a problem. What is a problem is when he calls in to the answering machine that he will be out sick. There is no warning and it causes problems. He suggested having set morning hours. In the afternoon Ken could close his door to the public and get his paperwork done or attend a meeting. Bruce T. agreed with this idea and stated that morning meetings could be foregone when there are set office hours. Ken S. stated that a part time position would provide more coverage in the spring and other busy times. Brian G. stated that with Heidi and Julia on board it should cut him some slack. Julia C. stated that the UVM intern would be staying on through the spring and could possibly help out. If not, there are other possible internships. Brian G. suggested leaving things the way they are for a year. Bruce T. restated the need for set, reliable morning office hours. Lee S. also suggested morning office hours. Carol J. suggested advertising the hours in the News & Citizen.

Brian G. stated the second topic he wished to discuss is the Zoning Administrator's Employment Agreement. He explained that the Selectboard was implementing contracts with appointees and employees to address specific expectations. He asked for input from the boards as Ken works directly with them. Julia C. explained the elements of a basic employment agreement and stated that all employees would participate as they are hired or appointed. Brian G. asked Julia to send the board Chairs a copy of the draft employment agreement. He indicated that any board input should be sent to the Selectboard.

Brian G. stated that the Town had received notice of award of a $10,650 planning grant, and asked Ken to summarize the proposed project. Ken explained that the award was actually underfunded but that the budget had been adjusted to accommodate the lesser amount. George Robson had assisted in pursuing the grant funding, which would involve a consultant's study/market analysis of downtown to identify needs and possible improvements. Bruce T. stated that the study would indicate how to market the town and promote it economically. Sam G. stated that the information could help downtown survive the bypass. Lee S. inquired about the grant time frame? Ken stated the funds could be expected in February. An RFP could go out in January for a consultant. Brian G. stated that the Selectboard was sad to see George Robson's resignation. They accepted it with regret, and hoped he could come back some day. Ken S. stated that George has become an LCPC County Director.

Brian G. stated that Barb Farr had come to the Selectboard with a CREW update. He asked Julia C. to summarize Barb's presentation. Julia C. gave an overview of the current status of the CREW project including the possibility of the North American Hockey League locating in the area. Sam G. asked if Barb had tried to get the Selectboard to influence the Planning Commission to change their mind about the zoning district designation along lower Bridge Street. Brian G. stated that she had not approached the Selectboard in that manner. He stated that she had asked each town to consider donating a week of labor and equipment toward the project, which the Selectboard had felt, was too great of a commitment. He indicated that she mentioned Gary N. had agreed to coordinate town participation. Gary N. stated that Barb had spoke at Rotary about the idea, but that he hadn't agreed to anything until he had more information. Brian G. stated out. Julia C. questioned pursuing an enforcement action without naming the landowner. She stated that she thought the violation would have been cured a lot sooner if Sonny Demars, landowner, had been named in the suit. The $38,000 settlement is not likely recoverable without the real estate to attach. Brian G. stated in Burlington landowners are named in enforcement actions. Gary N. questioned why the property owner should be involved? Julia C. replied that as owner they signed the permit application, and ultimately are responsible for their land. Kelly R. stated it sounds similar to landlord housing issues. Paul Trudell suggested having Julia C. contact VLCT with regard to the two legal issue questions. Julia C. stated that she would get the answers in writing. Bruce T. suggested always using VLCT's free (members) legal services first.

Brian G. asked if there was anything else to discuss? Heidi K. stated that she wished to know what boards wanted her attendance at meetings, and how often? Brian G. stated that getting other board meeting minutes was very helpful to the Selectboard. He stated he understood Heidi's role to include assisting the boards so no additional budget was needed. Heidi agreed part of her role was to assist with looking for funding. Brian G. stated that everyone is still trying to get their arms around the various boards and that he does not think the Selectboard will fund an additional Rec/Trails budget. Heidi stated that she had not been aware until she read the minutes that Rec/Trails had asked for anything. Stephen J. suggested that Heidi might want to attend meetings once a month to take some of the load off Ken. Brian G. stated that the Selectboard supports all the groups and the enthusiasm they demonstrate. He sees lack of information as the only problem.

Stephen J. asked for an update on the Bike & Ped Grant status. Brian G. explained that though the approved version and the town version differed, the state funded $413,000 for the project, which should take approximately two years to complete. A written agreement is pending for the terms of the grant. Stephen J. stated it is a tough area to walk and thinks the project will be great.

Theresa B. thanked Heidi K. for the Festival of Lights. Heidi stated the Downtown Group had all worked on it. Kelly R. asked who won awards? Heidi summarized the winners. Lee S. asked if Heidi could coordinate the minutes of the four groups and funnel them through Julia's office, once a month. Julia suggested if so, then more frequently so the information wasn't outdated. Heidi stated River Arts is moving toward independent non-profit status. There are some revisions necessary to the Downtown Designation application. MCP will be working on developing committee structure and a steering committee. Heidi stated River Arts and Rec/Trails are pursuing grant funding. Lee S. asked if they have been cleared with the Selectboard. Julia C. stated the groups have been really good about notifying her office. The Selectboard has been made aware of all pending applications affecting Town property or finances. Brian G. stated that part of funding Heidi's position was to pursue funding for the groups as well as for herself. Brian G. thanked everyone for coming and stated that the boards would be meeting January 16th to specifically discuss the Neighborhood/Commercial District.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45PM
Julia Compagna, Scribe