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**TOWN OF CHARLOTTE
PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 3, 2016**

Minutes are subject to correction by the Charlotte Planning Commission. Changes, if any, will be recorded in the minutes of the next Planning Commission meeting.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeff McDonald, Chair; Peter Joslin, Gerald Bouchard, Charles Pughe, David Kenyon, Marty Illick.

ADMINISTRATION: Jeannine McCrumb, Town Planner/Zoning Administrator.

OTHERS: Bud Shriner, Robert Mack, Peter Trono, Adam Hausmann, Jessica Sanford, David Miskell, Lane Morrison, Dean Bloch

AGENDA ITEMS:

H.779 Agricultural commodities, products, agricultural accessory uses – Discussion
Nomination of Zoning Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. McDonald, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR AGENDA/CONSENT AGENDA

Regular agenda approved as presented.

Consent Agenda: none.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MINUTES: 2/18/16

Mr. Bouchard noted that address on line 68 and 85 seemed to be off. Upon review it was determined that address numbers should read ‘3117/3119’.

MOTION by Ms. Illick, seconded by Mr. Bouchard, to approve the Planning Commission minutes of 2/18/16 as amended.

VOTE: 6-0 in favor.

H.779 Agricultural commodities, products, agricultural accessory uses – Discussion

Ms. McCrumb read the purpose of the bill as introduced and summarized as follows:

H.779 proposes to require as a permitted use:

- 1) The storage, preparation, processing, or sale on a *farm* of
 - a. raw agricultural commodities of which >50% may come from off farm
 - b. value added products of which 75% or less of raw agricultural commodities may come from off farm
- 2) Agricultural accessory uses on a *farm* that are not tied to *farming* if the use / structure

- 48 a. has obtained wastewater / potable water supply permit approval
49 b. meets local regulations for noise, setbacks, parking for similar land use
50 c. takes place on a lot that is equal to or greater than minimum lot size in
51 district
52 d. takes place within existing or temporary structure – new structure or
53 expansion of structure or parking can require conditional use review
54

55 Mr. Shriner thought that this would standardize how businesses are permitted and even
56 the playing field.
57

58 Mr. Miskell noted this had been brought before legislature over 8 years ago; past 2 years
59 Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (AAFM) had reviewed and noted that different
60 towns are reviewing / permitting in different ways. He noted that the interest is in
61 figuring out how to draw more folks to farms. Mr. Miskell explained that the bill is a
62 placeholder meant to draw out discussion but not to move forward this year. He added
63 that he asked to be part of any hearings on the subject. He indicated not an issue for him
64 as he sells direct to markets. He recalled how agricultural activities were discussed when
65 he first subdivided and that restrictions were imposed by the Planning Commission.
66

67 Ms. McCrumb noted that she felt generally people were in favor of agricultural related
68 activities including processing but noted that she had concerns with other businesses not
69 really related to farming (i.e. wedding barn, music events, etc).
70

71 Mr. Hausmann and Ms. Sanford – feels bill supports everything that’s been happening in
72 state for last 15 years. Viability issue and need to evolve. Wholesales, farmers markets,
73 processing. Feels the regulations are restrictive in defining what it means to farm.
74

75 Mr. Mack – what would be an accessory use that might be an issue? He reiterated the
76 need for consistency in regulation. He noted that the farm on Cheeseactory Road and
77 what’s been done is very successful.
78

79 Mr. Pughe agreed on the need for consistency and both he and Mr. Joslin felt it was at
80 least partially an issue of scale.
81

82 Ms. Illick asked if conditional use language that is specific and predictable would be
83 amenable to the farming community.
84

85 Mr. Mack compared the situation to how we regulate landscapers in Charlotte. He hopes
86 the Commission understands the importance of knowledge from folks who farm and
87 doesn’t just send off a letter to the legislature. Ms. McCrumb acknowledged Mr. Mack’s
88 statement and indicated that’s the intent of the discussion.
89

90 Mr. Hausmann sees events as a different way to sell products. They are a valuable
91 marketing tool.
92

93 Mr. Trono remarked on difficulties associated with being a new farmer - cost of land,
94 equipment etc and need to look at other things to make the farm work. Mr. Joslin asked
95 Mr. Trono to provide an example of something he'd like to do that he can't do now. Mr.
96 Trono replied more direct sales versus through stores; processing which may include
97 product currently deemed as 'off farm'; commercial farm stand.
98

99 Mr. Pughe asked how to handle success and growth of business that may come with that.
100 Mr. Joslin agreed that it's valuable to reconnect people to their food sources but added
101 need to be cautious about scale. Ms. Illick agreed and added need for consistency within
102 districts. She said that agriculture has evolved into more of a business and communities
103 need to recognize that. Mr. Mack commented on the availability of excess structure on
104 both Hausmann and Trono farm and need to use that.
105

106 Mr. Trono gave an example of a breakfast with foods provided from different farms in
107 the community. Mr. Bouchard remarked on how different farms are from even 15-20
108 years ago.
109

110 Mr. Miskell noted work that had been done several years ago on the various farm related
111 definitions. Ms. McCrumb noted that it's currently consistent with state definitions. Mr.
112 Miskell suggested cooperatives as a scale related definition. He noted that Mr. Trono
113 could slaughter more animals on his property but the existing no more than 50%
114 regulation prevents him from doing so. Mr. Miskell supported including activities that
115 aren't directly farm related. There was some discussion on context and use of farm-based
116 commercial activities versus village commercial. Is it fair? Wineries were given as an
117 example.
118

119 Ms. Illick wanted to know where the 75/25% presented in the draft legislation came from.
120

121 Mr. Mack noted that by putting other products on a farm (commercial farm stand / store)
122 it would reduce single item purchases and perhaps reduce traffic.
123

124 Mr. Miskell agreed to look for cooperative marketing definitions previously presented.
125 Mr. Hausmann suggested checking with Farm to Plate and NOFA as both working on
126 language for town bylaws and plans.
127

128 **Other business:**
129

130 **Nomination of Zoning Administrator –**

131 Mr. McDonald asked Mr. Bloch to provide a summary of the candidate. Mr. Bloch noted
132 Mr. Rheume had previous police experience and was currently finishing his degree in
133 Public Administration. He added he had very good references. Mr. Morrison also
134 endorsed the candidate as did Mr. Bouchard and Mr. McDonald.

135 **Motion by Ms. Illick, second by Mr. Bouchard to nominate Joe Rheume. as Zoning**
136 **Administrator for Charlotte. Vote: 6-0 in favor.**
137

138 There was a brief discussion on proposed solar off Ethan Allen Highway and the highway
139 designation as part of Champlain Byway.

140

141 **Agenda items for joint meeting with Selectboard:**

142 Ms. McCrumb asked for topics for discussion with Selectboard. Mr. McDonald
143 suggested Town Plan. Mr. Morrison asked about the schedule – November or March,
144 2017. Mr. Bloch suggested sticking with substantive issues revealed to date:
145 groundwater / drinking water, farm related activities, other? Mr. Morrison added that we
146 should discuss the Articles not moved forward by the Selectboard for vote this past Town
147 Meeting – conditional uses and two-family dwellings. Mr. McDonald noted need to
148 focus on plan and not other issues based on time involved. Mr. Bloch asked about other
149 hot button issues. Ms. McCrumb suggested the railroad and current limits and ownership
150 of abutting properties.

151

152 The Commission and Mr. Morrison discussed schedules and agreed that a joint meeting
153 would be scheduled for Thursday, May 5th at 7pm.

154

155 **Water Matters:**

156 Ms. Illick invited folks to attend a Water Matters Meeting presented by Lewis Creek
157 Association. The meeting will take place in Hinesburg on March 31.

158

159 **Motion to Adjourn by Ms. Illick. Second by Mr. Bouchard. Vote: 6-0 in favor.**

160 **Meeting adjourned at 8:35PM.**

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163 Minutes respectfully submitted, Jeannine McCrumb, Town Planner / Zoning Administrator.

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