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 DATE November 27, 2012

APPROVED

**HUNTINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION**  
 Minutes of October 22, 2012

**PRESENT:** Everett Marshall, Julia Austin, Knox Cummin, Gordon Miller

**ABSENT:**

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Nancy Bretschneider, Joe Spence, Joe Perella, John Altermatt, Barbara Elliott, Morris Knight, Lori Nyland, Rich Lachapelle

**MINUTES:** Heidi Racht

**Agenda**

- 7 pm Meeting begins  
     Minutes of October 8, 2012  
     Mail
- 7:25 Public Comment
- 7:30 DBR Discussion with Zoning Board of Adjustment members
- 8:15 Village Hill Preliminary Subdivision Review
- 9 pm Member Business
- 9:15 Adjourn

After a lengthy discussion and consulting of State Statute regarding whether there would be a quorum of the Commission to act on the Village Hill Preliminary Subdivision Review, the results were inconclusive; Commission determined that if the meeting started with four members and one recused himself, the hearing could continue with the three remaining members. The meeting was called to order at 7:22 pm; chaired by Everett Marshall.

<b>Mail</b>	Deferred
<b>Minutes of October 8, 2012</b>	Deferred
<b>Public Comment</b>	<p>Nancy Bretschneider appeared before the Commission to discuss a minor change to the plat of her three-lot subdivision, approved in 2009. Because she had moved the well for Lot 1-3, which has an easement on Lot 1-1, her attorney instructed her to file a new plat in the town land records. Bretschneider had consulted ZA Ed Hanson, who wrote her a note to bring to the Commission with the mylar she wished to record. His note referenced Subdivision Regulations Section 7.7 that addresses changes to a subdivision plat. Bretschneider explained that she had a closing the following day at 8:30 am.</p> <p>The Commission asked Bretscheider to leave the mylar, with promises to review it and take action later in the meeting. Everett Marshall said he would email her with the Commission's determination.</p>

	Bretschneider left the meeting.
<p><b>DRB Discussion with Zoning Board members</b></p>	<p>The Commission met with ZBA members Joe Spence, Joe Perella and John Altermatt to discuss the Commission's desire to have the town change from the Zoning Board of Adjustment to Development Review Board. The Commission would no longer do subdivision review, which would be done by the DRB, leaving the Commission free to do planning activities and projects.</p> <p>Everett Marshall introduced the topic, noting that it is "truly difficult to move things forward with a volunteer board." He noted that the Commission is "pulled in a lot of directions" and that it was "difficult to do a lot of planning."</p> <p>Joe Perella asked about the percentage of time spent on public hearings. Marshall replied that it was less than 50%, but because the Commission tried to move along projects and accommodate landowners, the meetings were often used for this purpose, leaving little time to plan. He noted that the planning time was "45 minutes when we really need a two-and-a-half-hour block of time." Julia Austin disagreed, stating, "It's more like 85% in my mind." Included in this number was work on the regs as well as hearings on projects.</p> <p>Austin noted that the Commission spent 85% of its time, "going to the past, rather than looking to the future." Gordon Miller added that it took three-and-half- years to get the regs updated.</p> <p>John Altermatt asked about the time spent with Subdivision Review. Marshall explained the process for Major and Minor Subdivision Review. In answer to another question, he replied that a number of sketch plans, which is the very first step of a project's path through subdivision and an informal, non-binding discussion "don't go anywhere."</p> <p>Perella said, "It's fair to say that it's pretty time-consuming, working with the Town Plan and tinkering with the regs." He added, "The Planning Commission does a lot more work than the ZBA" and described the Commission work as "factually more dense," compared with the ZBA's "straightforward" work of administering the regs.</p> <p>If the town created a DRB, Perella said, "I'm not sure all the ZBA members would have the time." He thought there might be an issue staffing it initially and the DRB might need current HPC members to guide the new members on the details of subdivision review.</p> <p>Knox Cummin mentioned that ZA Ed Hanson had told the HPC that he could prepare materials for the DRB hearings. [This is currently done by Linda Ruscitto for the ZBA and Heidi Racht for the HPC.]</p> <p>Joe Spence asked about the size of the DRB. Marshall said he thought a five-</p>

member board was typical. Huntington Town Administrator Barbara Elliott pulled out some research she had prepared for the meeting, confirming that 22 Vermont towns have five-member DRBs, while 34 towns have seven-member DRBs.

John Altermatt expressed a sense of “guilt” about how much work the HPC now does, compared to the ZBA. He noted that the ZBA met on an “as needed” basis and that there is a sense of urgency with project review, due to the short building season in Vermont. “Staffing is a concern,” he concluded.

Knox Cummin said that a five-member DRB “would make sense.” He said that he “would like to do planning work. It makes sense to split the functions.” In fact, he said he was “depressed about how little [planning] we get done during the meetings.”

Spence said he couldn’t see any difference – if you have five members now, how much work can you get done? “It’s going to take a lot more people.” It was clarified that the DRB and the Planning Commission would be separate functions and the town would still have two Boards.

Perella asked what the meetings would be like – would there be two meetings per month? Cummin responded the HPC now has public meetings, which take up planning time. Marshall talked briefly about the Flood Regs and the time that the updates took, which is also a form of planning.

Perella asked, “Is it fair to say that the majority of the Planning Commission is in favor of it?” Marshall replied that [absent members] Dana Cummings and Ginger Lubkowitz were both in favor. Cummin said he wanted to spend time on the town plan and, as things are, it is hard to do it. The other members at the meeting were in favor of the change.

In response to Altermatt’s comment that Gordon Miller would be spending more time by being on two Boards, Miller said that it would be same amount of time that he was now spending attending meetings for two Boards and that he wanted the town to vote on the DRB, as opposed to the Selectboard making the decision.

Elliott replied to Perella’s question about procedure by informing the group that the Selectboard had asked her to do research on the DRB. She had documents that discuss creation and phase over. Towns have outlined a process that Huntington could follow. She said that the Selectboard could hold an informational meeting and then make a decision.

On another topic, Perella then made another pitch to change the zoning regs back to the previous version [original document, adopted in 1992] that allowed additions to nonconforming structures to be considered by the ZBA under

	<p>Conditional Use, rather than as a Variance as it is now in the current regs [adopted in 2009].</p> <p>At the conclusion of the discussion and after the ZBA members left the meeting, Elliott asked the HPC to make a recommendation that she could take back to the Selectboard.</p> <p>Julia Austin made a motion that, having met with the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the Huntington Planning Commission recommends that the Selectboard establish a Development Review Board; seconded by Knox Cummin.</p> <p><b>The Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the Selectboard establish a Development Review Board.</b></p> <p>Marshall asked Elliott to convey to the Selectboard that the Commission was not speaking for the ZBA, which did not seem strongly in favor of or against a DRB.</p>
<b>Village Hill Preliminary Subdivision Review</b>	<p>Commission member Knox Cummin recused himself as he is the landowner for the Village Hill project. This left three members to hear the evidence.</p> <p>Due to the fact that it was determined on Tuesday, October 23, by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns that the Commission did not have a quorum, it could not legally take evidence on the Village Hill project in a hearing. Therefore, an informal discussion took place between landowner Knox Cummin, architect Ben Bush, neighbors Morris Knight, Rich Lachapelle and Lori Nyland, and the three Commission members present. The preliminary subdivision review will be rescheduled and re-warned.</p>
<b>Member Business</b>	<p>1. Everett Marshall gave a brief update on the ECOS grant.</p>

**Adjournment:** The Commission adjourned the meeting at 9:37 pm when the members left the meeting.

**UNAPPROVED MINUTES TO THE HPC:** October 26, 2012

**MINUTES APPROVED:** November 26, 2012

**APPROVED MINUTES TO THE TOWN CLERK:** November 27, 2012