

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP MEETING
MONDAY, May 15, 2023**

APPROVED MINUTES

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. Roll Call was taken and technical difficulties with Zoom were experienced and fixed. Crissy Webster noted that the High School has a good setup for meetings.

Selectboard Members: Chair Kristi Morris, Vice Chair Michael Martin, Everett Hammond, Walter Martone, and Crissy Webster were present in-person.

Administration: Town Manager Jeff Mobus was present in-person.

A. Downtown and Commercial Development

Chair Kristi Morris discussed the point of this meeting is to review and discuss our Strategic Plan priorities for 2021 and it is recommended that we update those often and that's what the focus of this meeting is tonight. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he has never done this with the Board when they developed the original strategic plan as he came into it at the end of the process and put it together in this report. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added they will review where we are and make sure these are things that we still want to do and how we how we want to do them or what's holding things up currently. Chair Kristi Morris noted that we have some preliminary timeframes that were established previously that will either need updating or they're complete.

A1. Continue implementation of the Main Street Master Plan, in particular the top of the Town Square and River Street

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed the first item was to continue implementation of the Main Street master plan, in particular the top of the square in River Street. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the Northern Gateway and the Clinton Street diet are the two projects from the Main Street master plan that were chosen. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added the Town has received grant funding and is having scoping studies done on each project and the results should be available in 2023, which is this year. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted we're probably closer to funding them in 2024-2025 but the completion date is 2025. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further noted he expects the Clinton Street Diet to go before the Northern Gateway, because of the water projects.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that he would add 3B would be scoping projects and that would be in 2023 and then as funding comes available to construct projects in 2024 to 2026. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that on that item we have identified two projects and we've also got scoping studies for both of those projects. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added we did identify a third project that we're trying to work on, which is Town Hall, but he will bring that up when they discuss the other place in the plan that Town hall is mentioned.

Chair Kristi Morris discussed under item A1-1 review and prioritize specific projects and interim dates, has been completed that. Chair Kristi Morris added that A1-2 was to review with Regional Planning Commission to explore potential funding opportunities and Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that is how we found the scoping grant money for these two projects and the item is completed. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added A1-3 select the priority projects which are the two we have and begin engineering design to make them and that is the scoping project we're doing right now. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that as funding becomes available, they would construct projects in 2024 to 2026.

Further discussion ensued to clarify that the Town Manager would say A1-3A would be scoping the projects, which is what we're doing now in 2023. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added then as funds become available, we will construct projects in 2024 to 2026. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added if the road diet is found to be a good solution after the scoping project that would go to construction in 2024.

Walter Martone commented that they would really need to repeat this process for additional projects. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed. Walter Martone added that he wondered if they should be thinking of starting that sooner rather than later just to start having them line up, noting it takes a while to find money, so we can at least alert the Regional Planning Commission that we're ready to do other projects just in case funding came along and it matched up to the projects lined-up. Walter Martone further added it just so happened that funding came along, and it matched up those two gateway projects, which is one of the reasons why we've moved them forward because the funding matched it. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted we found funding for the scoping of those two projects, but there's still the execution of those two projects that we will have to find money for. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he worries about getting too far ahead and having all kinds of projects on the wall that then become so old that they need to be redesigned again in five or six years because you are finishing up the projects that you are doing.

Further discussion ensued that 2023 is going to be the scoping of these two projects and that's going to give us potentially, what we need for an RFP for construction or if the projects are not feasible.

Walter Martone commented that these projects take a long time to get off the ground and he believes it is always important to have some in your back pocket that are ready to go. Walter Martone added that they are always saying that they are always looking for shovel ready projects with funds and the more shovel ready projects you have, the more likely you will qualify for something that's become available. Chair Kristi Morris commented that "shovel ready" means post scoping. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that you would also have to have the funding lined up as very few things that are 100% funding. Walter Martone added that you would need designs also.

Further discussion ensued that the Northern Gateway project is the shared use path from the head of the square going back towards the Plaza and it would not address the Handy building directly. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added in the Main Street Master Plan, where the plan says Handy building it's talking about the cantilevered walkway in the back of the Handy building, an elevated walk to the garden, which would be \$750,000 or \$800,000. Additional discussion ensued regarding the riverwalk for bike and pedestrian traffic that will be particularly challenging as we don't own that parking lot so there'll be all kinds of right of ways that must be obtained to get permission.

A2. Finish the Cascade Comtu Park

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that the Comtu Cascade Park really is done, there's regular maintenance that needs to be done. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added we need to upkeep the property, but as far as strategic planning is concerned that project is complete. Michael Martin inquired if there were some garden plans that weren't completed, such as a rain garden and some other plantings. Michael Martin added he knew some structures were eliminated such as an elevated catwalk that was eliminated because of the cost. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that some of the planting was abandoned but the rain garden is still there. Michael Martin noted that he thought there was room for improvement at the park and wouldn't want to check it off as being done.

Jessica Martin Springfield on the Move Director via Zoom discussed that she agrees with Town Manager Jeff Mobus that there are ongoing maintenance items that need to be worked out. Jessica Martin Springfield on the Move Director noted this is their third summer with the park. Jessica Martin Springfield on the Move Director added as far as continuing to work and improve on the park she believes that regarding any additional structures, long term some sort a hatch shell over the stage instead of having to install a temporary tent for events. Jessica Martin Springfield on the Move Director further added as far as the vegetation in the rain garden the Town decided to just go with grass over the rain garden and not plant any flowers as that would give additional seating area should people want to sit down there next to the concrete stage. Jessica Martin Springfield on the Move Director additionally discussed there are some additional improvements they would like to have the Town consider such as removing an old unused lamp post that's in in what used to be the pocket park area and then just ongoing maintenance, noting safety concerns regarding the old pocket park. Further discussion ensued that Jessica Martin Springfield on the Move Director believes as far as the Main Street Master Plan is considered we have accomplished everything that was budgeted for so far. Walter Martone commented that if they wanted to do something they could change this and just say ongoing maintenance and improvements to the park and that's something that can be done on an ongoing basis. Walter Martone added as far as the construction of a park, the rain garden they did put in the infrastructure of rain garden, just not the plantings on top of it so that could be done at any point.

Further discussion ensued regarding the question of what is considered a strategic plan item and what is maintenance and easy things going forward. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that when talking about strategic planning, we've developed that place for downtown where people can congregate and that was the purpose for the Main Street Master Plan, and we have accomplished that. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that when you're done with a project, you don't walk away from it, you must maintain it and keep going and you'll keep coming up with things to improve it but the basic function there is already being served.

A3. Valley Street Development

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that with moving Code Enforcement to the Planning and Zoning Administrator, Chris Palamar works directly with Chuck Wise, and they've gotten much more action on this item. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added it is much more strategic and consistent in how they approach each property. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added they've contacted 30 different owners who are out of compliance so it's a much more structured approach what they're doing. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that he has had them focusing on two areas, Valley Street and Furnace Street.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that this year the Town has shifted to enforcement, and we have started dealing with properties that require mandated enforcement, such as the order on 84 Valley Street. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the police have been very active in that area to support the efforts to make Valley Street a little bit better. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added the Planning Commission is reviewing what we would need to be done in our bylaws so that we could be eligible for the Neighborhood Development Area. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued the Planning Commission is still reviewing that and they have not come back to the Board with recommendations yet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted it's one of those situations where there's 12 out of 17 items that you must have to meet to be eligible for a development area designation, so they have to look in our bylaws to figure out how we want to pick and choose and move it forward.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed the Town has replaced the retaining wall in the back of the parking lot because it had fallen in to start helping work our way on Valley Street. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that a lot of this is just talking about enforcement, and he would say that we are a year behind. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added item A3-1 define area of Valley Street to focus on 2021, has been completed. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added item A3-2 identify buildings that may be in current violations, has been completed. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that we notified the owners in 2021 and 2022 attempting voluntary compliance. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further discussed on A3-3 the example of that is right beyond Elm Terrace, there was a property owned by a retired veteran that did not comply with our ordinances, and it's finally at the point now where it does comply.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed item A3-4 that voluntary compliance was requested in 2022 and then we will commence enforcement actions in 2023. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added on item A3-5 he has not worked with Springfield on the Move to research potential funding resources that could be used to purchase some of these structures so he will move that to 2023.

Michael Martin inquired regarding item A3-1 what areas of Valley Street to focus on were identified. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that the area that we're focused on goes from the beginning of Valley Street up to the bridge. Further discussion ensued to clarify the end point being up near 121 Valley Street. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that there have been five different addresses on Valley Street that have received letters. Chair Kristi Morris inquired without naming specific addresses at this time if we had reached out to the owners other than enforcement action to see potential plans. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded a lot of times they can get voluntary compliance, noting that Chris Palamar has been working with the owners.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed one of the things we're going to run into on Valley Street is there are flood hazard areas along Valley Street, noting that we have one owner who's trying to fix up a property, but can't get a permit because of the flood zone designation. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant noticed that flood hazard area and information has been sent on the same flood hazard mitigation program that we have the Kingsbury's in because if we can't issue permits because of the flood situation there, there is not a lot of a lot of help coming. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that along that brook there are floodplain issues, so it will not be as easy to develop it as we may have thought when we learned about the program. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted it was 34-36 Valley Street, and it really doesn't meet the conditions due to the floodplain situation there.

Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant added that the property has a walkway bridge to their property, and they have the property across the road as well, but both parcels are in the floodplain. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant further added they would have to do a lot to make the development reasonably safe from flooding, if they wanted to change anything, such as raise the building up above base flood elevation.

Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant discussed the owner wanted to change it to apartments, but to be able to change it to apartments, they would have to make the building reasonably safe from flooding by doing things to mitigate flood damage risk such as raise the building completely, install flood vents, raise all utilities up above base flood elevation. Carrie Kellow continued we told the owner this and they haven't expressed a desire to try to go through flood hazard review through the Development Review Board. Michael Martin inquired if we know how many of the properties on Valley Street are impacted by this. Carrie Kellow responded there are quite a few properties in the flood hazard area.

Further discussion ensued regarding some buildings on Main Street being in the floodplain also and these buildings would also have to go through flood hazard review through the Development Review Board to prove that the development was constructed to be reasonably safe from flooding.

Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant discussed 100 River Street went through a flood hazard review and they had to prove that they were not substantially improving the property, that they had already done some things to make the building reasonably safe from flooding beforehand, and that it was a historically contributing building, so there are a few things that get people out of that but a normal residential house isn't going to be necessarily a historic building and that's where it gets more difficult. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant added she went to the four-day training for Flood Hazard and for us to be able to participate in the flood insurance program as a Town you must make sure that you're following flood hazard standards for what FEMA has said you have to do. Carrie Kellow further added it's crazy the amount of things you have to consider, they're even talking about if somebody's doing interior work and it's in a flood hazard, and if that interior work is considered a substantial improvement, they have to make that building reasonably safe from flooding and do all this flood hazard mitigation to their property in order to do interior work, as well as exterior. Carrie Kellow continued that if you wanted to have a garden, that's okay unless you do a raised bed garden and then you must go through your flood hazard review and you may not be able to do it because that increases the liability of damage, such as potential things floating down the river damaging other structures.

Michael Martin inquired how it was connected to flood insurance if anybody in the flood hazard is required to have flood insurance and if all these properties have it. Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant responded they're required to have flood insurance if they are in a flood hazard area, noting if they have a mortgage the banks will make them get flood hazard insurance. Walter Martone inquired if the floodplain designation prevented them from any of their code enforcement. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded it did not prevent us from enforcing the ordinance violation clean-up.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed item A3-4-A3-6 he would change the dates to 2023. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that item A3-5 research potential funding sources, that he will work on that this year. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he spent the first two years being manager feeling like he was constantly in crisis mode, and he finally feels he is at the point now where we can do real planning and try to make things better for the future instead of just being in survival mode constantly. Town Manager Jeff

Mobus further added that when he and the Budget Advisory Committee talked last year about the budget, they talked about some long-term things that we need to plan for, so it's appropriate to get this process done before we start the next budget process.

Further discussion ensued that for item A3-2 we have identified the buildings that are not in compliance with our ordinances and the building we have addressed most strictly is 84 Valley Street that has the demolition order. Additional discussion ensued that the other buildings out of compliance have been given action plans or tickets and there have been 2-3 tickets written.

Walter Martone commented that a housing study is being done by MARC and the Regional Planning Commission, and they're looking for opportunities for increasing housing. Walter Martone inquired if it is likely that there are some places that they could possibly identify for housing. Walter Martone noted that he wondered if they want to add something on here in anticipation of some places being identified to start work on identifying developers who might be interested in doing things. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded as far as workforce housing; he did not think they would find anything else to develop on Valley Street because of the floodplain.

Carrie Kellow Planning and Zoning Assistant displayed the Flood Ready Vermont maps for the Board and participants to see what the flood hazard mapping looked like for Valley Street. Carrie Kellow pointed out that the red areas on the map were the 100-year floodplain and the white shaded areas were the 500-year floodplain as designated by FEMA. Carrie Kellow added there are quite a few properties along Valley Street in the floodplain and the owners would either have to build outside the designated flood area or mitigate their buildings to make them reasonably safe from flooding. Carrie Kellow noted that for some of these parcels it would be hard for them to build outside the flood hazard area because they don't have any area on their property outside the floodplain.

Chair Kristi Morris inquired if we had already identified the Neighborhood Development Area around our downtown. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that we would have to change some of our ordinances, and some uses to qualify, and the Planning Commission is working on that now.

A4. Lower Park Street Development

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed A4 Lower Park Street Development we have made some good progress on, and the enforcement action has been pursued since 2018 against 33 Park Street and currently there's a purchase and sales agreement between River Moguls and Springfield Regional Development Corporation, with a closing scheduled for this month. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added the town is supplying the funding with a loan from the revolving loan fund. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added the town also applied and received a grant to address 43 Park Street and it's expected that will be completed in 2023 as well. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued there has been a slight holdup because the original assessment came in at \$25,000 which wouldn't have been enough to make it work for the Kingsbury's, but they pointed out that the demolition was only on the one back piece and the rest of it was still qualified residential and that brought the value up to \$75,000. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further discussed we replaced the retaining wall at the bottom of Park Street on the right as you're coming down.

Chair Kristi Morris commented when we talk about housing there is some new potential now out there for development, noting the Comtu Falls hydro dam is privately owned that brick building but he wondered if we had any thoughts around that for something. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed Chair

Kristi Morris was talking about 10 Park Street, the big brick building right across the bridge on the left. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that there's an option on that property by the same group that's bought all the other properties. Walter Martone added things are obviously moving on and he inquired if we are at the point now that we need to start thinking about doing the redevelopment plans for Parks and Woolson, if that should be one of their goals that they need to add on to the strategic plan. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed that he thought it made sense to add this to the strategic plan. Further discussion ensued that it would be phrased best as "review the Main Street Master Plan" as there is a plan for that property and how it could be used in the master plan.

Chair Kristi Morris inquired if they wanted a date of 2024 on that item. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that he is working with the Brownfields Steering Commission to get funding for Phase two and he believes that will get done this year. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that after phase two, you'd still have to go into the next part and do all but a corrective action plan. Further discussion ensued to confirm this would be added as A4-4 with a completion date of 2025.

A5. Support Black River Innovation Campus (BRIC) area development

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed item A5 Support Black River Innovation Campus Area Development. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he asked Matt Dunne, what was the number one thing that he would ask the Town to work on and it was that retaining wall and was completed in 2022. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that what we have done to support the BRIC project and 60 Park Street, is we did apply and receive a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant for Life Safety Code Improvements at 60 Park Street, and that project is just starting now. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued they are hoping to get the bids out the RFP out soon. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that we are funding the Life Safety Code Improvements for a sprinkler system mainly and the Town has been using the gym at 60 Park Street and there will be further discussion in 2023 as else the Town can help to support BRIC. Further discussion ensued that this item should be ongoing and there may be other options for use of that building and they want the building to be a community hub and we may be able to help them secure other tenants through our marketing. Additional discussion ensued that there are grants and housing funds that are available, but it must have a low-income component for 5 years.

A6. Concentrate on Efforts to improve Main Street

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed item A6 Concentrate on Efforts to improve Main Street. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added projects such as the Town Hall front renovation and Town Hall parking lot and other improvements identified the Main Street master plan should be priority for implementation. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that they identified Town Hall and we tried to get a Downtown Transportation Grant to address the parking lot and the first part of that project is to do the foundation underneath the parking lot and we were told by the State that was a less attractive project simply because you couldn't see the benefit of the work so that is why we did the sidewalk because we were told that's a good visible project.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed the Town has received a small grant to do an ADA evaluation on this building, which would be followed up with a free heating evaluation. Town Manager Jeff Mobus after these evaluations are done, the town would be eligible for a grant of up to \$500,000 to address the deficiencies of town hall with up to 20% of those funds being allotted for ADA remediation. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added if we decide that we want to keep this building we are working on that project

as well. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that as we figure out strategically where we want to go with this building and the Community Center, and requested the Board let him know if we decide that we do want to leave this building for 60 Park Street so he can move that money to the Community Center. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further discussed the last thing that we've done on Main Street is we did agree to provide a loan from the Town Revolving Loan Funds for improvements at 27-31 Main Street, and the town has also installed flashing signs at crosswalks by the Community Center and by the Comtu Cascade Park.

Walter Martone inquired if the ADA assessment being done at the Town Hall will include ADA parking. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed. Walter Martone inquired that the ADA compliance could potentially be part of this \$500,000. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed and added it's a small grant, but the State is coordinating this under its program called MERP (Municipal Energy Resiliency Program) and you're allowed to use some of the funds for ADA evaluations. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that they will also do a free heating evaluation for up to five Town buildings and we've got those lined up. Further discussion ensued to confirm that 27-31 Main Street is the building on the corner with H&R Block.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed on A6-1 we've identified the main town hall currently as the project and A6-2 completing plans, designs, and specifications for 2022 to 2024 and we are still inside that timeframe, because evaluations will be this year. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added A6-3 searching for funding we have that possible source of funding line if the other things all fall through, and we want to keep this building. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added A6-4 identify sources of matching funds, there are no matching funds for that \$500,000 grant. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted it is a competitive process, they don't just give it out to everybody, but he believes they have \$13 million lined up for this but it must be a municipally owned building to qualify so if you rent if we had a property that we rented the funds couldn't be used for that.

A7. Improvements to the Community Center on Main Street

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed A7 improvements to the Community Center on Main Street, the windows on the top floor have been replaced to improve heating efficiency. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added the efforts to repair the ADA ramp and fire escape the south end of the building were not successful, he noted when we put this in an RFP there were simply no bidders. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added the heating system needs replacement and the building is not ADA compliant with no ADA access to the second floor or to the ladies' restroom.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that conversations have not started about possible relocation to 60 Park Street or other future uses of this property should a relocation happen. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he has spoken with both the current Senior Center Director and the current Parks and Rec director regarding relocating. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added the Senior Center Director really would rather not relocate because they get a lot of walk-in business from the two high rises and thinks that they would not walk to 60 Park Street, and he believes that she is correct about that. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued the Parks and Rec Director said if we were going to get some use of that property, we still need the gym because we need two gyms, if we were given what's currently being used for Parks and Rec area and build administrative space somewhere else, he would rather be over at Riverside to combine all their efforts there. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that you could make an administration area as part of a steel frame building that could be then tied into replacing the pool house and could probably reduce the number of tennis courts as tennis has been easily supplanted by pickleball.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed if we do want to try to make that building ADA compliant, we were told before the cost would be over \$2 million. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that the \$500,000 grant could be used perhaps to help fund an elevator for ADA compliance, and to certainly improve the heating efficiency of that building, which would mean putting in a new heating unit. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if we did a scoping study of the building. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed and noted that was where he got the number from. Further discussion ensued that the scoping study also mentioned electrical upgrades. Additional discussion ensued regarding the process taken when no bidders are received for an RFP.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that we have been told by the Fire Marshal that we can't get rid of the fire escape that goes up to the second floor on that end of the building either because there is not another one close enough to the south end of the building. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added the fire escape route must be part of this whole thing. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that when we talked to engineers last year, we learned that because this is a weird combination of a handicap ramp and then the fire escape it's best to do a design build with a contractor and we haven't found anybody to do that.

Further discussion ensued that it's likely we did not get any bidders on this RFP as there was not a set of plans to provide some specifications and that we should have an engineer do plans.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed on A7-3 the big thing is that we need to determine whether we want to keep the Community Center or not, or moved to BRIC that target is 2023 and the other two pieces A7-1 and A7-2 were targeted for 2024. Further discussion ensued that the final determination would be 2024.

Additional discussion ensued regarding A7-3 were ideas for possible uses of the Community Center building if they were to move to 60 Park Street and the collaborative discussions with the School District and RVTC were likely referencing makerspace opportunities.

A8. Hotel and/or Motel

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed A8 hotel and motel we have not started looking at that item. Chair Kristi Morris further discussion ensued that this idea was from Chair Kristi Morris and if they should keep this item. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that it would not hurt to leave this item in the strategic plan. Walter Martone inquired if they should do some market analysis as to whether a hotel/motel would thrive in the downtown area in Springfield, noting this could be part of their market campaign. Additional discussion ensued that we have the hotel at Exit 7, the Hartness House is open again, and we have several Air B&Bs in the area. Further discussion ensued that Air B&Bs take residential housing out of the housing stock. Walter Martone noted concerns that if this item was not kept in the strategic plan, it would fall off their radar. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he will add the market analysis for 2024 so that they are ready for items 1 and 2 in 2025.

B. Rural Economy and Neighborhoods

B1. Zoning Regulation Amendments

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed item B1, to make rural districts more friendly to owner businesses and the State of Vermont has a brand in the traditional countryside. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that

this section was done by George McNaughton. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added he went through this section with Chick Wise the Planning and Zoning Administrator. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that Chuck Wise mentioned as we are revising zoning ordinances there should be a definite eye towards attracting remote businesses. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued the ordinance was supposed to be supportive of economic and development principles as Chuck Wise put it.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed this is an ongoing process and he (Chuck Wise) was a little hesitant to target smaller specific items in the ordinance, preferring to say that they should be supportive of economic and community development principles as a more general approach. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he (Chuck Wise) feels very strongly that trying to attract remote workers would bring in much more value than trying to support agricultural projects here and there. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that he (Chuck Wise) thinks you could get many more remote workers in than people who are trying to set up a gentleman farm or whatever.

Chair Kristi Morris commented that the issue he has always had with identifying agricultural is most of those establishments are up and running now, such as Wellwood's Orchard even though it's not Springfield, and Blais properties and farmstand etc. Chair Kristi Morris added there were some activities and there was even some talk about trying to get working farm experience with housing. Chair Kristi Morris further added there was some efforts there with the State to encourage that so that people could come and stay at the farmhouse and then would participate in some of the activities. Chair Kristi Morris continued he has no problem with identifying those areas for our Trails and Rural Economy and putting them on the map, but he thinks it would be difficult to create them. and as people see the advantage of that and had the opportunity for a farm stand, apple orchard, winery, brewery, or whatever then those would then just be added to the map. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that as they get to the marketing section, but he believes it's become clear that we have capacity for water and wastewater treatment and particularly high strength wastewater treatment, and we need to make sure that we're marketing that as we market the properties on Clinton Street or the Industrial Park because we have the capacity to deal with stuff that a lot of Towns don't anymore.

Further discussion ensued that they don't want to lose sight of these items but that as we are working on the zoning ordinances you should be much more supportive of economic and community development.

Michael Martin commented that he thought the purpose of that was to encourage the adaptive reuse of farm buildings for other industries as one of the main emphasis of changing our zoning regulations to allow a former farm building to become a workplace with some restrictions on maintaining the character of that firm given that is what our character is and we want to try to preserve it not to create new farms. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that one of the challenges is that those (farms/agriculture) tend to be larger area properties, so it doesn't encourage more housing.

Walter Martone commented that he would like to ask Chuck Wise to come and tell us about his ideas and tell them how the changes that have already been made are working. Walter Martone added that he would like to have a public hearing or something to specifically invite in those people or organizations that are doing it already, and to give them an opportunity to tell us what they need to enhance what they're doing, as well as ideas of if they were coming into Springfield, brand-new, what might make it more attractive.

Further discussion ensued that in terms of agriculture and marketing we have a couple of Christmas tree farms and there is potential for cannabis farms.

B2. Workforce Housing

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed B2-1 workforce housing to identify locations where new residential developments may be appropriate and this was for 2023 and we are in time with that. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that Mike Martin had a suggestion that we look at which water accounts don't have any usage as a starting point because where you would want to put residential housing would be along water sewer lines ideally. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added item B2-2 we've constantly been looking for funding for workforce houses but right now the money is not set aside that way. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that item B2-3 the Neighborhood Development Area shows up in this part of the plan also.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that there aren't a lot of open spaces along our existing water sewer plant. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he has spoken with the Housing Authority about a plan they have to put between 6 and 10 single-family residential housing up near Mountain View. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that he knows that there's been discussion on the property at the end of the loop of Cutler Drive, the Gurneys bought that, and they wanted to develop that at some point, but he hasn't heard anything more about that lately. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that someone by the end of Paddock Road towards the interstate, on the other side of Route 11, are advertising space up there that could be turned into a residential development where they'd have to put in their own water and sewer, infrastructure, and roads. Michael Martin inquired if that area could tie into the water and sewer that supplies the prison. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that it would be tricky, noting that he asked our Water and Sewer Department about that. Town Manager Jeff Mobs added that we don't currently provide water to the hotel down there, the Best Western, the water comes from Charlestown. Michael Martin noted that was something that the developer did years ago. Chair Kristi Morris added that was even before the prison.

Further discussion ensued that one of the challenges you run into in these older communities is that housing especially with the housing boom if there is a developable place, we tried to take advantage of it when the shops are booming, and it is tricky for older Towns to reconfigure the Town to have developable space.

Chair Kristi Morris commented that some of these concerns were addressed in the House bill this year that ultimately did pass and it's the redevelopment of your downtown districts, neighborhood development areas, village centers, etc., to a relax state permitting requirements for Act 250 applications because we already have structures there, you're just kind of adding in or infilling where you can. Chair Kristi Morris continued that it doesn't happen a lot Springfield as you can see, it's already developed most of it, but he argued for points outside like we have for instance Pedden Acres, there's certain pockets of housing that's developed around the Town, it's outside of our Neighborhood Development Area but it's still on water and sewer or just water with its own septic. Chair Kristi added that one of the things that came up is the number of vacant homes that we have in our community, noting that at one time he had five in his neighborhood alone. Chair Kristi Morris further added that there's opportunity with these vacant buildings, there was some talk about they're privately owned or estate homes that people

inherited, and they sit there vacant, and there's opportunity for housing or workforce and how we get the owners interested in returning these to active housing.

Walter Martone discussed that the DOI Committee has held two housing events and that this last one Laura Ryan, Head of the Housing Authority, was talking about the cost of bring the infrastructure in and doing a development out by the Maples, makes it cost prohibitive to do these things. Walter Martone added that there's definite interest in it and there were several other people from different housing agencies there too and they were just kind of getting into groups and talking and one of the things that there seemed to be a great deal of interest about was maybe pulling together a committee or a group who might start exploring these opportunities. Further discussion ensued to correct that the potential development was next to Mountain View, not the Maples and putting in infrastructure for 6 or for 10 housing units is not that different in cost but it would make a difference on the pricing that they could offer housing at. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added there is a small strip of land that is owned by the School District that if that was added to the Housing Authority land, they could get in 10 and make it financially viable. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that he mentioned this to the Superintendent of schools who's see if there's any covenants on that land or a reason why they still need that land. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that the land next to the Maples the problem with that is that the funding for that space for the Maples was from USDA and they would have to get the permission of USDA to develop that property.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that he is also working with the Springfield Housing Authority for 31 Pearl Street, he wants to deed that over to them and they've agreed to take it down and put up single-family residential there. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that once 316 is down, he will put a Lien on it and the Windham Windsor Housing Trust will then build up there'll be enough to pay off the lien. Crissy Webster inquired if it was workforce housing or low-income housing. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that there are income restraints when working with these groups, but they also do maintain nice properties and they are single-family homes which are different. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that when he talks to the Housing Authority about those 6-10 properties by Mountain View, it's very much for workforce housing because they wouldn't be in that program is a VHIP where they get \$50,000 per unit but then it must be restricted to low-income housing for five years.

Further discussion ensued that Town Manager Jeff Mobus and Bob Flint had worked with a gentleman that talked about bringing their own development, but it was discovered that the gentleman was just trying to get paid for consulting and not actually doing the work.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that people like Brian Herson have good ideas for workforce housing in the sense that you develop a property but then the person who acquired it would have instead of sweat equity they'd have Service Equity, where the cost of them renting it or owning it would be reduced by a certain amount based on their profession, like teachers, policemen, engineers, and mechanics, or whoever we're trying to attract, and they would get reduced rates that will be supplemented by this fund from the State to just encourage the workforce people to be here or anywhere in Vermont. Chair Kristi Morris added that there's some funding available and he advocated for that. Walter Martone inquired if the Pearl Street property would have to be low-income. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that Laura Ryan's preference if they use all their own funds would be to do workforce housing there.

Further discussion ensued that the Town Manager only changed the date of B2-3 to 2023.

B3. Neighborhood Redevelopment

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed item B3 neighborhood redevelopment. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added for B3-1 the idea is consider the creation of some sort of commission which has jurisdiction to redevelop or improve non-industrial and non-downtown districts for 2023, B3-2 develop a relationship with the North School Preservation Society and developing the North Springfield school and getting their facility occupied, B3-3 to assist the reopening of neighborhood grocery and general stores, and then B3-4 improve walkability by improving sidewalks and enforcing existing ordinances. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added the North School Preservation Society is one of those things where it's a strange challenge, we don't need the field up there anymore that we were using for soccer and we've been maintaining it and heating the hut and everything, but we don't need that field. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that we could easily squeeze that in at Riverside.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that Chris Merrill would rather develop rotary field area because we're only using half of it for one field, even after we shifted over and get it onto our own property. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that we are maintaining a property that we don't need, and the North School Preservation Society is unable to maintain it. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added he wants to develop an agreement with the North School Preservation Society that we maintain it more as a recreation area which is different than soccer field work which has a much more regular schedule. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he thinks the playground area is useful just as the common is useful, just as Freedom Park is useful as a neighborhood playground area.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that he has talked with Bob Flint about redeveloping that facility and they both think that the best use of that North Springfield School would be his housing. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that they seem to think that there's a covenant on the use of the property that it has to be used for the public good, but he has done the deed research back to when the School District received the property from the Parker family and from a previous selling before that and he went back into the early 1800s and did not see any deed restriction. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that the only covenant that there is that there's one border that must have a fence on it between the school property and the neighbor. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that there will be more conversations on how that property can be brought back into use and really be a community hub over in North Springfield.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed item B3-3 work to assist the reopening of neighborhood grocery and general stores, JC's market got funding through SRDC's programs not through Town programs, but we could have helped them with our Revolving Loan Funds if that had come to that. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the other neighborhood market we have on South Street looks like it's getting close to reopening. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added the Park Street market has been turned into housing and he doesn't see that turning back into a small neighborhood market. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that he believes it's important that we continue to be willing to help these areas if someone does want to have a market or another small business in the neighborhood that they are aware of the revolving loan funds and how we can help or other resources to support the SBA down at SRDC is a resource and make sure that they realize there are opportunities for assistance but they have to be willing to cooperate there are requirements.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed item B3-4 improving the walkability of the town and improving the sidewalks and enforcing existing ordinances, that's two different pieces. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that we have 22 miles of sidewalk, which would be millions of dollars to replace all of them and he thinks we need to evaluate if there's some sidewalks that we can discontinue. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added the other part is in our ordinances, if you have vegetation that goes from your property and blocks the sidewalk or if you have trash cans on the sidewalk, or you park your cars so you're blocking the sidewalk, those are all ordinance violations. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued in past years the Town had gone through a couple times a year to clean some of these areas up, but in the ordinance, it really should be the property owners that are dealing with that and not wasting Town time.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that last year he spoke with the Highway Foreman and gave him copies of the ordinance to give out to people, so we started that process, but it is going to be a long education. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that we must reach out to people and say that we can no longer keep doing this anymore with the labor shortages and stuff. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that even without the labor shortage, that's just not the way our ordinances are written. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that enforcement of our ordinances really started in 2022.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that efforts to reinvigorate Project ACTION have started and this has the potential to improve all our neighborhoods. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added the Union Park Neighborhood Association is still active from the original Project ACTION and it doesn't make a difference up there and it would be nice to have similar ones in other neighborhoods.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that Parks and Rec is working on a plan to overhaul Freedom Park with an entrance off Merrill Street, a dog park, and replacing the warming shelter and this effort to work on that neighborhood would be augmented by Code Enforcement to focus on Furnace Street. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that Chris Merrill's plan would be to change the entrance to the park and have it come off Merrill Street with a short trail down to the top level which is not used anymore and build a dog park up on that level and then walk down to where the playground area is from that side. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added it would feel more like a park, but it would still be easily accessible to that whole neighborhood.

Further discussion ensued that they should add a category to review and consider the elimination of sidewalks and that the best side to eliminate would be the North side or West side if you have a choice. Additional discussion ensued that out of the 22 miles of sidewalk we have we only maintain 12 miles of sidewalk in the winter.

Further discussion ensued to determine a date and time for the second Strategic Plan Workshop, and it was decided it would be held on May 24, 2023, from 10am to noon and they would discuss items C and D in the Strategic Plan. Additional discussion ensued if it would behoove us to have one full time position for the Code Enforcer, the Animal Control Officer, and the health Officer as they all kind of tie in together and they tend to work with similar groups, but the issue would be that you would have to find someone with training in all three areas as there are different certifications. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that more than half of the departments have mentioned that a Grant Manager position would be beneficial.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary