

Town of Ithaca Planning Committee
Thursday, December 20, 2018

Committee Members: Rich DePaolo, Chair; Rod Howe and Pat Leary

Board/Staff Members Present: Bill Goodman; Susan Ritter, Bruce Bates, Dan Tasman.

Guests: Jamie Gensel (Fagan Engineers), Ithaca High School student (1)

- 1. Persons to be heard:** None
- 2. Committee announcements and concerns:** None
- 3. Consider November meeting minutes:** Rod moved, Pat seconded; minutes approved with no changes.
- 4. Consider revisions to Chain Works District Planned Development Zone (PDZ) language:**

The committee continued review of the PDZ, picking up where they left off in November at Section 271-17.6 B. Building Guidelines. In terms of the Energy section, Sue reiterated the concerns with having requirements for Solar Reflectivity. She had spoken with Nick Goldsmith (Sustainability Planner) who explained that in the northeast, heating in the winter is more energy intensive than cooling in the summer, so roof reflectivity is less important and may even be undesirable from a solar heating perspective. Nick indicated that reflectivity was discussed during the drafting of the Green Building Policy, but was not something they included. Large non-residential buildings that generate heat through their operations may benefit from limiting additional heat from solar thermal loads via incorporating solar reflectivity. However, attempting to define a threshold (building size, heat load) would be complicated and does not seem to warrant mandating a requirement. The committee agreed to remove the solar reflectivity index requirements, along with the other remaining energy-related provisions, considering that they will be better addressed by current requirements in the town's solar law and NYS Building Code. Additionally, the committee felt that the forthcoming green building legislation would better address energy issues in the town.

The committee then moved on to the Architecture provisions. Dan Tasman described the various architectural guideline elements proposed in the PDZ. Rich questioned why we would have different guidelines for architectural elements (roof slope, roof material, building cladding) that differ from those proposed in the town's form-based code (FBC). Rod agreed, stating that having some synergy with the town's proposed FBC standards would be preferred. After some discussion, the committee requested that staff reconcile the proposed architecture guideline requirements with the town's new proposed FBC zoning requirements.

For the Windows, Awnings and Doors section, Jaimie Gensel thought these guidelines originated from LEED ND (Neighborhood Development). The idea being that building frontages and how they are designed are important aspects for a walkable neighborhood. The Chain Works District is slated for a substantial NYSERDA grant award provided they meet certain LEED-ND certification standards. While Jaimie did not believe the architectural guidelines related to LEED-ND, he was concerned that building frontage provisions (windows, awnings, doors) would be important elements and tied to the NYSERDA grant.

Rich suggested retaining the Windows, Awnings and Doors provision as currently drafted given the NYSERDA grant requirements, but to unify the Architectural provisions with the new FBC language.

The committee then discussed the proposed site plan requirements for Section 271-17.8 - Administration. The staff proposal maintains all the same requirements currently in Town Code with the exception of site plan modification thresholds that trigger requirements for Planning Board approval. Sue explained the proposed amendments, including eliminating the \$20,000 cost threshold for construction/alterations of the exterior of a building or site. Sue felt that this threshold (and likely any cost threshold) was arbitrary and did not adequately assess the significance of a project modification and need for Planning Board review. In the future, she'd like the town to consider removing this threshold from the zoning chapter of the Town Code. Also proposed to be changed was the parking space threshold (the construction or relocation of spaces) from three to five spaces, eliminating need to obtain site plan approval in the case of a building occupancy change, and the elimination of needing approval in the case of a decrease in the size of a previously approved building.

The committee agreed to the changes described above.

In addition, the committee expressed interest in modifying two related, but separately listed thresholds, one requiring approval for the addition of 1000 SF of enclosed space and the other enlarging an existing or previously approved building by more than 15%. The committee expressed interest in slightly increasing the thresholds as well as possibly merging them. While adding 1000 SF to the hospital would not be significant, a 15% increase could be significant. And likewise for a small building, a 1,000 SF addition to a 4,000 SF building would be substantial, while a 15% increase would be minor. After some discussion and various alternative suggestions, the committee asked staff to explore the matter and provide a proposal for the next meeting.

Also, the committee was interested in modifying the threshold pertaining to the movement or shift in the location of one or more buildings horizontally or vertically. After some discussion they agreed to eliminate the distance criteria (3 feet laterally and 6 inches vertically), and instead use criteria that the horizontal/vertical shift would be allowed as long as it did not affect roads, buffer areas, etc. Rich also wanted the Planning Director to review the proposal to make sure it was not incongruent with any concerns raised by the Planning Board during the review process. The committee requests staff to provide language for the next meeting.

5. Discuss interpretation of rental registry law:

Sue recapped from the last meeting that the committee had agreed that house/pet-sitting should be exempt from the rental registry and had requested staff to devise language with help from the attorney for the town and bring it back to the committee for consideration. Bruce stated that staff had recently met with Susan Brock and that she thought they could address this issue through a definition of "rent". Once there is a definition for review it will be brought to the committee.

6. Staff Reports

Bruce reported that they have received 390 applications thus far for the rental registry, with 90 being for single family residences and the remainder two-family.

Sue said that when the draft findings statement for the Chain Works District EIS is ready for review she will bring to the committee for an initial discussion and consideration.

7. Discuss next meeting date and upcoming agenda items:

Next meeting is Thursday, January 17th at 4:00 pm.

Agenda topics:

- Continue review of draft Chain Works District PDZ
- Discussion potential modification to rental registry law