

**Town of Amherst Planning Commission  
Minutes  
January 3, 2024**

A meeting of the Town of Amherst Planning Commission was called to order by Town Manager Sara McGuffin on January 3, 2024, at 7:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall at 174 S. Main Street.

It was noted that a quorum was present as indicated below:

|   |                  |   |                  |
|---|------------------|---|------------------|
| P | June Driskill    | P | Michael Driskill |
| P | William Jones    | P | John Vandervelde |
| A | Anne Webster Day | A | Veda Butcher     |
| P | Clifford Hart    |   |                  |

Town Manager Sara McGuffin, and Clerk of Council Vicki K. Hunt in her capacity as Secretary, were also present.

Town Manager McGuffin called for nominations for Chairperson. By motion of Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Vandervele, June Driskill was nominated as Chairperson. There being no other nominations, the Commission voted 5-0 to elect June Driskill Chairperson as follows:

|                  |     |  |                  |        |
|------------------|-----|--|------------------|--------|
| June Driskill    | Aye |  | Anne Webster Day | Absent |
| Michael Driskill | Aye |  | John Vandervelde | Aye    |
| William Jones    | Aye |  | Veda Butcher     | Absent |
| Clifford Hart    | Aye |  |                  |        |

Town Manager McGuffin turned the meeting over to the Chairperson June Driskill.

The Chair called for nominations for Vice Chair. By motion of Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Vandervele, Clifford Hart was nominated as Vice Chair. There being no other nominations, the Commission voted 5-0 to elect Clifford Hart Vice Chair as follows:

|                  |     |  |                  |        |
|------------------|-----|--|------------------|--------|
| June Driskill    | Aye |  | Anne Webster Day | Absent |
| Michael Driskill | Aye |  | John Vandervelde | Aye    |
| William Jones    | Aye |  | Veda Butcher     | Absent |
| Clifford Hart    | Aye |  |                  |        |

The Chair opened the floor for citizen comments.

There being no one present in person or otherwise to speak, no comments were made.

Mr. Jones made a motion that was seconded by Ms. Driskill to approve the minutes of December 6, 2023, meeting.

There being no discussion, the motion carried 5-0 according to the following:

|                  |     |  |                  |        |
|------------------|-----|--|------------------|--------|
| June Driskill    | Aye |  | Anne Webster Day | Absent |
| Michael Driskill | Aye |  | John Vandervelde | Aye    |
| William Jones    | Aye |  | Veda Butcher     | Absent |
| Clifford Hart    | Aye |  |                  |        |

Town Manager McGuffin gave a report on property consisting of 22 acres, generally known as the “Ambler property,” designated as tax map numbers 95-A-90, 90A, 91, and 110-A0103, and generally located across South Main Street from the Amherst County High School. At its meeting on September 6, 2023, the Planning Commission voted to change the property’s designated use from commercial to public/semi-public uses. Due to the failure of Town Council to accept the donation of the property for use as a park at its meeting on December 13, 2023, staff requested to amend the Town’s Future Land Use Map to return the twenty-two acres of land to its original designation for commercial use.

The proposal to return the property to its original designated use was advertised for public hearing for two consecutive weeks, as required by State Code. Because the public hearing was not set by the Planning Commission, staff requested ratification of the public hearing by the Commission.

Mr. Hart made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Jones to ratify the setting of a public hearing on determination of whether to amend the Town’s Future Land Use Map to include a proposed commercial use designation on a portion of the property generally known as the “Ambler property,” designated as tax map numbers 95-A-90, 90A, 91, and 110-A0103 which, if approved, would return the property to its original use, as recommended by staff.

After discussion, the motion carried 5-0 according to the following:

|                  |     |  |                  |        |
|------------------|-----|--|------------------|--------|
| June Driskill    | Aye |  | Anne Webster Day | Absent |
| Michael Driskill | Aye |  | John Vandervelde | Aye    |
| William Jones    | Aye |  | Veda Butcher     | Absent |
| Clifford Hart    | Aye |  |                  |        |

Veda Butcher entered the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

The Chair opened a duly advertised public hearing at 7:06 p.m. on determination of whether to amend the Town’s Future Land Use Map to include a proposed commercial use designation on a portion of the property generally known as the “Ambler property,” designated as tax map numbers 95-A-90, 90A, 91, and 110-A0103 which, if approved, would return the property to its original use.

There being no one present who wished to speak on the matter, the public hearing was closed at 7:06 PM.

Mr. Driskill made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Hart to make a recommendation to Town Council for approval of an amendment to the Town’s Future Land Use Map to include a proposed commercial use designation on a portion of the property generally known as the “Ambler property,” designated as tax map numbers 95-A-90, 90A, 91, and 110-A0103, returning the property to its original use, as recommended by staff.

After discussion the motion failed 3-1-2 due to lack of a majority vote, sending a divided recommendation to Council, as follows:

|                  |         |  |                  |         |
|------------------|---------|--|------------------|---------|
| June Driskill    | Aye     |  | Anne Webster Day | Absent  |
| Michael Driskill | Aye     |  | John Vandervele  | Abstain |
| William Jones    | Aye     |  | Veda Butcher     | Nay     |
| Clifford Hart    | Abstain |  |                  |         |

Town Manager McGuffin gave a report on a proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance on the following items:

1. Design standards to differentiate between the CBD and B-2 districts;
2. Consideration of definitions and guidance for display and storage of goods to be sold in commercial districts;
3. Consideration of an amendment to the Sign Ordinance that would allow ‘open’ flags and chalkboard displays;
4. Consideration of a new process for minor site plans and plot plans;
5. Consideration of new definitions for ‘driveways’ and ‘parking areas;’ and
6. Short Term Rental.

Further discussion on consideration of the above items was deferred to the Commission’s February 7, 2024, meeting.

There being no further business, on motion of Mr. Vandervele which was seconded by Mr. Hart, and carried 6-0, the meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM, according to the following:

|                  |     |  |                  |        |
|------------------|-----|--|------------------|--------|
| June Driskill    | Aye |  | Anne Webster Day | Absent |
| Michael Driskill | Aye |  | John Vandervele  | Aye    |
| William Jones    | Aye |  | Veda Butcher     | Aye    |
| Clifford Hart    | Aye |  |                  |        |

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June Driskill, Chairperson

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_