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3 **Town of Charlotte**  
4 **PLANNING COMMISSION**  
5 **Meeting Conducted at Town Hall and via Teleconference**  
6 **August 17, 2023**

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8 ***DRAFT – subject to approval by the Planning Commission***

9 **Planning Commission:** Charlie Pughe (Chair), Robert Bloch, Carrie Spear, Gerald Bouchard, Linda Radimer. (Matt Krasnow & Kyra Wegman were absent).

10 **Staff:** Larry Lewack, Town Planner; Nicole Burnell, Recording Secretary.

11 **OTHERS:** Paul Plante, Frank Tenney, Deirdre Holmes, Emily Lewis, Dan Mallach, Mark Kane, Hannah Loupe, Darren Schibler

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14 ***Posted Agenda:***

15 7:00 PM Call to Order

16 7:02 PM Changes to Agenda (if any); Public Comment

17 7:05 PM Consultant interviews for Villages Master Plan project:

18 DuBois King team (7:05 – 7:35)

19 SE Group team (7:40 – 8:10)

20 8:10 PM Next steps for consultant contracting

21 8:20 PM Review & approve draft meeting minutes: June 29, July 20, Aug. 3 mtgs.

22 8:30 PM Act 47 implications for Charlotte (*continued*): discuss current analysis; next steps

23 8:45 PM Town Plan concepts re: village density, affordable housing

24 9:15 PM Adjourn

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26 **Call to Order:** Charlie Pughe called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

27  
28 **Changes to Agenda (if any):** None.

29 **Public Comment:** None.

30  
31 **Consultant interviews for Villages Master Plan project. DuBois King team:**

32 Introductions from Dubois & King staff, Dan Mallach and Emily Lewis. Credentials include  
33 planner, arborist, and landscape architect. Dan elaborated on how his colleagues at Dubois & King  
34 would also be available for consultation. They have offices in Randolph & South Burlington, and  
35 have done village master plans in several Vermont towns. Dan emphasized the following points in  
36 his presentation: 1) Do no harm to historic character; 2) start with an assessment of wetlands &  
37 other environmental constraints; 3) Read up on previous planning studies completed for  
38 Charlotte, to build upon work done before. Dan distributed work samples from recent projects in  
39 Bethel and Richmond & asked for questions from PC members.

- 40 • Robert Bloch asked Dan to quantify successful community outreach. Dan responded it's key  
41 to provide multiple avenues for involvement. With help from the town, they will design  
42 outreach strategies to involve existing social groups and multiple stakeholders. 10% of  
43 residents involved would be considered highly successful.
- 44 • Linda Radimer asked if Dubois & King had reviewed Charlotte's Town Plan. Dan said: not  
45 yet, but they would if hired. Dan indicated in general, the Town Plan is the guiding star.  
46 They would also look closely at the existing LURs, to ID constraints & needed changes.
- 47 • Charlie Pughe spoke to the timeline for the project asking if Dubois & King could meet the

- 48 demands of that schedule. Dan responded that it is a generous schedule that appears  
49 feasible, and reasonable for them to produce the desired work products if hired.
- 50 • Robert asked if Dan and Emily would be the lead for Dubois & King, and if so, what  
51 percentage of their time would be devoted to Charlotte. Dan answered that it would vary  
52 dependent upon stages of the project.
  - 53 • Darren Schibler, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), gave a brief  
54 introduction to his role in the project. They will actually contract with the consultant(s)  
55 (with advice & consent from the town), monitor project progress, and pay for the work.
  - 56 • Darren pointed out that Dubois & King is prequalified to complete the scope of work for the  
57 transit study commissioned by the Charlotte Energy Committee.
  - 58 • Charlotte Energy Committee member Deirdre Holmes briefly described the transit study  
59 funded by CCRPC. She asked Dan to elaborate on how consulting for both projects could be  
60 managed. Dan commented on possible overlap between the two projects.
  - 61 • Robert asked if master planning would include housing specifics. Dan confirmed. Robert  
62 questioned if surveys would be used. Dan responded yes, that visuals would also be used .
  - 63 • Linda pointed out that prior development in the West Village has been built upon wetlands,  
64 and asked if Dubois & King would recommend expansion in these areas. Dan noted this was  
65 a historic development pattern in the West Village & perhaps a middle ground could be  
66 reached, if it's possible to expand.
  - 67 • Gerald Bouchard pointed out two typical constraints to further development in Charlotte:  
68 limited septic capacity due to soils, and limited water.
- 69

#### 70 **Consultant interviews for Villages Master Plan project. SE Group team:**

71 Introductions from SE Group staff, Mark Kane, Director of Community Relations, and  
72 Hannah Loupe, Landscape Architect. Mark noted the SE Group also has offices in Utah and  
73 Colorado; ski towns they've worked with in Western towns have been facing affordable housing  
74 pressures for quite some time. Planners and landscape architects work closely together at SE  
75 Group. Hannah Loupe added their work balances respect for historic character with adaptation to  
76 modern demands for more housing and enhanced services.

77 Hannah mentioned recent bylaw modernization projects they've done in Waterbury,  
78 Ludlow and Waitsfield, VT, and passed around some sample work products. They described a  
79 just-completed study they did for the village of Westford, VT to explore infrastructure needs,  
80 which laid the groundwork for engineering studies to build a village wastewater system, and a  
81 town bond vote. She gave examples of novel outreach strategies. Mark emphasized they would  
82 integrate developing village plans ('place-making') with drafting amendments to Land Use  
83 Regulations (LURs) from the start.

- 84 • Linda asked Mark to elaborate on septic capacity and long-term health of existing wells.  
85 Mark responded these factors would be evaluated, along with other key constraints.
- 86 • Robert questioned Charlotte residents' readiness for change. Mark answered that they  
87 structured their work plan to tease out issues, concerns and ideas in an iterative process.  
88 Visuals of various village density scenarios will provide residents with specifics they can  
89 support (or oppose). This will help move the conversation forward, because planning is an  
90 ongoing challenge with predictable ups & downs.
- 91 • Hannah spoke to transportation issues within Charlotte, using Greenbush Road as an  
92 example. Robert responded that increasing retail options in Charlotte villages would likely  
93 reduce traffic, as fewer people will have to drive out of town to meet their needs.
- 94 • Mark shared an example from a recent project they did in Chester, VT. The master plan

95 included small changes, such as adding a footbridge over a river to access a new pocket  
96 park, with improved signage. Sometimes small changes like that can get residents excited  
97 about the potential to make larger changes.

- 98 • Deirdre Holmes again introduced the Energy Committee's transportation study. Darren  
99 pointed out that SE Group is not included on CCRPC's prequalified consultants list. Mark  
100 responded with benefits of having the two studies completed separately. Doing that doesn't  
101 preclude integrating thoughtful improvements in transportation with place-making work.
- 102 • Charlie pointed out that the traffic resulting from the ferry and Mount Philo create  
103 opportunities for small businesses to serve these magnets for visitors, who might spend  
104 more \$\$ while in town if there were convenient shops & eateries available in the villages.  
105 This will help create jobs that contribute to the town's long-term economic well-being.  
106

### 107 **Next steps for consultant contracting:**

108 Darren Schibler noted CCRPC will actually contract with the consultant(s) (with advice &  
109 consent from the town), monitor project progress, and pay for the work. If Dubois & King is  
110 chosen, the transportation study would be awarded to them too. Robert asked if Charlotte is the  
111 client or CCRPC. Darren answered Charlotte, with CCRPC oversight. Robert questioned if CCRPC  
112 goals are incorporated into oversight. Darren responded yes, but there is no hidden agenda. Linda  
113 questioned who represents Charlotte on the regional planning commission. Larry Lewack said it's  
114 Dana Farley, who is aware of this project & will be kept updated on our progress.

115 Darren asked for Planning Commission's impressions from the interviews. Responses:

- 116 • Robert commented that both interviews went well. He believes both firms are well-  
117 qualified, but he favors the SE Group. Their experience is deep. Their disqualification from  
118 working on the transit study isn't problematic for their work on the villages plan.
- 119 • Darren asked for feedback on the different approaches proposed for community outreach.  
120 Robert said he felt that both candidate firms glossed over this aspect. Charlie pointed out  
121 that starting by studying what has not worked, is a good approach to take.
- 122 • Linda spoke to Charlotte's agricultural heritage. Charlie responded that Charlotte's dairy  
123 farms are all but gone, and Charlotte's identity now needs to be redefined. Linda said she  
124 doesn't want to see Charlotte grow rapidly like Stowe.
- 125 • Darren asked whether it's more important to evaluate resources and propose options, or  
126 visioning. Consensus that presenting feasible options is the priority.
- 127 • Robert asked how we will know if the funding is being wisely spent. Darren responded that  
128 there are several specific deliverables that are required as part of the grant funding,  
129 including village scenario plans, updates to bylaws, and the master plan.
- 130 • Darren asked for input on crafting village plans and drafting bylaws simultaneously, as  
131 proposed by SE Group. Charlie stated support for this approach. Frank Tenney responded  
132 with concern that proposed bylaws might get voted down.
- 133 • Larry added that the Town Plan is not detailed enough with respect to village plans, and is  
134 also outdated, and hopes this project will set the stage for updating that plan in 2025.
- 135 • Darren spoke to qualifications of both candidates; both are qualified. Darren pointed out  
136 who would be working on the project from Dubois & King would primarily be Dan and  
137 Emily. SE Group would be Hannah and others; Mark Kane's participation would be limited.
- 138 • Darren noted that there seems to be more general support for hiring the SE Group. Charlie  
139 questioned when a response is needed. Consensus reached to send feedback to Larry by  
140 August 22<sup>nd</sup>; Larry will coordinate with Darren and Taylor Newton on next steps.

- 141 • Deirdre asked Darren to explain the pros and cons of the two projects having the same or  
142 different consultants. Darren responded that a single consultant would benefit the  
143 transportation study financially, as the budget is small.  
144

145 **Review/approve draft PC meeting minutes: for June 29, July 20, August 3, mtgs.:**

146 The needed quorum to approve the June 29<sup>th</sup> draft minutes was not in attendance. The  
147 needed quorum to approve the July 20<sup>th</sup> draft minutes was not in attendance.

148 **MOTION by Robert Bloch; seconded by Gerald Bouchard to approve the PC meeting**  
149 **minutes for August 3, 2023, as amended. VOTE: 4 ayes, motion carried.** (Charlie Pughe  
150 abstained from this vote, as he was absent from that meeting.)  
151

152 **Act 47 implications for Charlotte (continued): discuss current analysis; next steps:**

153 Larry reported that the Selectboard has decided the draft LURs Cannabis Standards will be  
154 put to a town vote and bundled with a vote for a town garage solar project. Larry reminded the  
155 Planning Commission of Matt Krasnow's suggestion to request time on the Selectboard's agenda to  
156 understand what the Selectboard is willing to approve, versus what will be put to a vote. Charlie  
157 disagrees with Matt's suggestion, as these issues will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the  
158 Selectboard & doesn't think the Planning Commission can do much to influence those decisions.  
159

160 **Town Plan concepts re: village density, affordable housing:**

161 Agenda item tabled due to time constraints. Larry created a handout with the statutory and  
162 LURs definitions for affordable housing and created a handout, which also includes current federal  
163 income guidelines to qualify. This will be added to the meeting packet for our next meeting.  
164

165 **Other topics:**

166 Charlie mentioned Linda's previous request for a discussion on water capacity. Linda  
167 clarified the point is to study water capabilities, such as the well study. She will prepare something  
168 in writing ahead of our next meeting, when this will be on the agenda.

169 Charlie updated the Planning Commission on Community Heart & Soul. Charlie has been  
170 checking in with Selectboard members on this from time to time. No endorsement yet. Robert  
171 responded that extensive community outreach is the core of CHS, and that the village master  
172 planning project we're discussing now could very well meet that need, if it's done right.  
173

174 **Adjournment:**

175 **MOTION by Robert Bloch; seconded by, Linda Radimer, to adjourn the meeting.**

176 **VOTE: 5 ayes, motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m.  
177

178 Minutes respectfully submitted:

179 Nicole Burnell, Recording Secretary, with edits by Larry Lewack, Town Planner.