

**TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT**  
**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, January 16, 2024**

**Members Present:** Kevin Anderson, Beth Cook, Bob Cook, Emma Hanson, Alice Peal, Jonathan Ursprung

**Members Absent:** AnnMarie Harmon

**Staff Present:** JB Weir, Planning and Zoning Administrator

**Others Present:** Chach Curtis (Selectboard), Robin Morris (Water Commission), Joshua Schwartz (Wastewater Planning Team Lead)

**II. Regular Business.**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm by Alice. The meeting was held in person at the Town Offices and remotely via Zoom.

**2. Review agenda for addition, removal, or adjustment of any items.**

No adjustments were made to the agenda.

**3. Public Forum.**

Nobody present requested time to address the Commission.

**4. Update from Chair – Budget Request to Selectboard**

Alice provided an update on her conversation with the Selectboard regarding the PC budget, noting that she had applauded the past few years of hard work by the PC and requested that \$12K be budgeted for potential work with a consultant in the coming year. She explained that Regional Plan updates may require that the Waitsfield Town Plan also be updated, which would require some outside help. Alice reported that the Selectboard had indicated the possibility of creating a reserve fund for the PC, so that funds are available as needed for this type of work going forward. Chach explained that creation of this type of fund needs to be approved by the voters at Town Meeting, but that once established, the unused balance of this year's PC budget can be rolled into the fund, and that additional funds may also be placed in the fund in order to total the \$12K requested.

**5. Bylaws – Approval from Selectboard**

Kevin reported that the Bylaw amendments had been approved; that no members of the public were present at the hearing, and after he provided a brief update and answered some questions from the Selectboard, they approved the changes.

JB explained that he and Randy are working on finalizing the grant report that needs to be submitted to ACCD; Kevin will communicate the PC's appreciation to SE Group; and CVRPC will be creating a large version of the Zoning Map. Those three actions will complete the project.

**6. Wastewater Planning Project**

Joshua, Robin, and Chach were present to report on the progress of the Wastewater Planning Team.

Joshua began by providing a slide presentation, explaining the history of wastewater management

efforts in Town, what the current project has accomplished so far, and where the Team is headed in the coming months.

The historical perspective provided information on needs, soil types and other restrictions impacting adequate wastewater management, past studies, bond votes, and other past efforts. Joshua then explained that the current work was precipitated in part due to the availability of ARPA funds made available to Towns, although the funds used for the project to date have generally come from grant awards. He indicated that the feasibility phase (February 2022 to January 2023) has been completed, as well as the preliminary engineering work (January – December 2023). The recent progress includes the creation of a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) summary, the 30% design Engineering Services Agreement (ESA), and the State's Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Priority List Application. A grant for public outreach has also been applied for, and several discussions have been held with potential funders.

The next phase will be focused on design work and landowner outreach, with a goal of having the information available to hold a bond vote in November 2024. It was explained that the bond vote for the full amount estimated for the project will need to be approved in order to demonstrate town-wide support to the various funders to whom grant applications will be submitted, and that all grants awarded will serve to reduce the amount that the Town will ultimately need to borrow in order to complete the project.

Joshua outlined how the Zoning Bylaws update, the upcoming Master Plan work, and the successful application for a Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) Designation all connect to the Wastewater Project, as all are inter-related portions of planning for the future of Waitsfield's Village areas.

The upcoming tasks for the Wastewater Project Team were then summarized, including an update to the related web page, a meeting with the Selectboard, work on funding applications, and outreach efforts. Outreach will occur through various elements such as media and direct outreach to residents, and will cover the critical aspects of the project – health matters, replacement of aging infrastructure, and allowing for responsible growth. Joshua noted that continued coordination with the PC will be important, as the NDA and Master Planning work will coincide with the upcoming system design work. It was agreed that unified messaging will be important so as to avoid confusion in the community.

Kevin offered some suggestions, including support for using a story map format on the web site and ensuring that both groups are providing the same information regarding the potential number of new housing units that might be supported by the wastewater system. He also cautioned against overwhelming the public with too many opportunities for input, and observed that benefits of master planning should be conveyed so that all relevant information is available at the time of the November bond vote.

Robin explained that current outreach is focusing on speaking with owners of critical parcels in both Waitsfield Village and Irasville, with the goal of gauging interest and learning of concerns regarding the project. He and Chach both spoke of commercial interests as well, both in terms of supporting business as well as recognizing the need for employee housing. Joshua confirmed that it is planned to determine where the most critical need is, using outreach to determine levels of interest for both immediate and potential future use. It is realized that some property owners may only become interested in connecting to the system in upcoming years, for various reasons. Robin also pointed

out that the future capacity of some parcels must be kept in mind, as the new regulations provide for additional density in the Village areas.

Alice pointed out that there is potential for additional flood resilience requirement to be imposed in future legislation, for which there may be associated costs.

## **7. NDA Designation**

Joshua continued his slide presentation, providing information related to the benefits of and potential area to be included in the NDA application. He explained that attaining an NDA Designation allows for further grant opportunities and a higher level of prioritization for State funding programs, as it essentially calls for development within concentrated areas adjacent to Village centers and downtowns. Waitsfield meets the eligibility criteria for the program, and the application is currently being developed.

Joshua shared the multiple maps used in determining where the proposed NDA perimeter should be set, noting the various natural constraints that impact where development is possible. He then displayed the identified maximum area, within which there are a couple of constraint areas, such as wetlands. He noted that the Wastewater Project benefits are mostly relevant to the Irasville area, but there are several other benefits of the NDA that pertain to all the properties included. The broader area anchors to the Designated Village Center, as required by the program.

JB outlined that the intent is to have a fully complete preliminary draft of the application available for review with ACCD by early February, and to use the feedback provided to complete a final application by early March for consideration by ACCD for approval during their mid-March meeting.

Kevin pointed out that the mapped River Corridor has not been included in the various restriction overlays included in the maps used to determine the proposed NDA.

The map slides presented by Joshua are all available in the meeting packet posted on the website.

## **8. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of December 19, 2023 were amended and approved.

## **9. Other Business**

Alice gave a brief update of hazard evaluation taking place as part of the Emergency Management Plan update.

## **10. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary