

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 3, 2024

Members Present: Beth Cook, Bob Cook, Emma Hanson, AnnMarie Harmon, Becca Newhall, Alice Peal, Jonathan Ursprung

Staff Present: JB Weir, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Others Present: None

II. Regular Business.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Jonathan Ursprung. 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 changes were made to the agenda.

3. Public Forum.

Joanathan recognized the Valley Reporters efforts reporting on matters that the PC has been addressing.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of August 20, 2024 were amended and approved.

4. Alice Update

Alice provided the PC with some information regarding the residents who live near the bottom of the North Fayston Road, who experienced impacts to their homes in the July 10-11 flooding. After hearing their concerns at the LHMP public hearing, Alice worked to track down older studies, and has worked with others, including FEMA representatives, to provide resource information to those residents.

Alice also explained that four sites in Town have been identified as having potential for being reconnected to the Mad River floodplain, and that she and others are working to secure Clean Water funding for this work, initially for a study and subsequently for completing the work. She noted that some of the study may address the impacts of invasive species on flood plain functioning.

AnnMarie reminded the group that submission of the LHMP has provided the Town with the highest level of ERAF for municipal sharing of covered emergency expenditures. Alice also spoke of the potential for the Plan to be adjusted going forward as further emergency concerns are addressed.

6. Village Master Planning

There was an extended discussion of what will be covered in the current Master Planning work regarding impacts to wetlands, precipitated in large part by a document presented to the Steering Committee by Sean Lawson. Sean had expressed concerns that the directive from DEC is that no further impacts to Irasville wetlands will be allowed, and that this would preclude any development at all to be planned for the area.

Several points were raised during the conversation, including:

- The Arrowwood report indicates both high-functioning and low-functioning wetlands
- ANR rules are becoming more restrictive
- State-level wetland mapping efforts are underway
- There are areas where development is possible outside of wetland buffers
- The Master Plan work is intended to determine where development might be suitable, with little or no impact to wetlands
- More definitive work on wetland delineation and wetland enhancement is planned to be part of Phase 2 of the Master Planning work
- The relationship between wetland permitting for individual parcels in consideration of what the overall Master Planning work outlines for comprehensively addressing wetland issues needs to be clarified
- Master Planning has other focus areas as well, such as the creation of a more pedestrian-friendly area
- The wording of the contract with SE Group, which does not expressly require that all proposed concepts completely avoid any wetland areas but rather asks for an outline of what development might have impacts on the wetlands

There was some discussion regarding whether or not the PC should issue a statement/position regarding these issues, but after reviewing the wording for deliverables included in the contract with SE Group, it was decided that the existing language is sufficient, and acknowledged by the PC that what is in that document is compatible with satisfying Sean's concerns.

It was confirmed that Jonathan will attend a meeting with the core team and Sean to cover these matters, and also confirmed that SE Group will be presenting at the October 1 PC meeting. Alice encouraged members to take a look at Middlebury's Otter Creek wetland study.

7. Groundwater Protection Overlay District

PC Comments – Jonathan brought up some areas of the Overlay language that need some further review:

- The map indicating the different zones is not referred to consistently
- Automotive-related used are not all defined
- Language regarding existing or potential sources being protected – this was discussed and it was agreed should be left in the document
- The possibility of outlining some enforcement of the capping of abandoned wells

JB explained that, with these items needing further review, along with some other things he had noticed in his study of the draft document, the Town's attorney should be consulted again to ensure that the language reads as intended. JB will request a further review, and bring the updated draft back for further evaluation, potentially at the September 17 PC meeting.

Alice noted that some ponds in the area of the source are potentially being considered hazards, and questioned if their proximity might create any issues.

Adoption timeline – The adoption timeline will be established more clearly once there is further review completed by the Town attorney.

8. Wastewater Planning Project Update

JB reported briefly that no Congressional Discretionary funding was received, and that more grant opportunities are being explored for construction of the system.

9. Other Business

No other business was taken up by the PC.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary