

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

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

Members Absent: None

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 7:02 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 adjustments to the agenda were proposed.

3. Public Forum.

No members of the public were present.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of October 15, 2024 were approved.

5. Groundwater Protection Overlay

Several concerns were raised by the group, including the use of logging equipment, snowmobiles, and ATVs in the various zones. Considerations such as forestry BMPs, educational signage, and the existing deed covenants on a large portion of the overlay area were discussed. JB indicated that most of his research led to overlays developed for areas with greater development and so did not include restrictions related to these types of concerns. He confirmed that he will consult with Robin Morris and Peter Lazorchak, and obtain further legal advice regarding the overlay language. Once these matters have been addressed, the PC will review the document again in preparation for warning the adoption process.

6. Village Master Planning

There has been no meeting since the public input session a couple of weeks ago; SE Group will be providing a summary of the meeting's results for the group at the next meeting.

AnnMarie reported that the dot boards which were filled out during the public meeting are available on the project web site, and shared some insights she gleaned from perusing the results. These included her noting that there was not full support for mixed income rentals aimed at first-time homebuyers, and the same was true for some related topics addressed.

There was some related discussion about matters such as keeping the area compatible with New England style architecture, and it was agreed that the affordability of construction as well as how much design review should be provided for are considerations when developing any related regulations.

There was consensus among the group that the questions posed at the recent session were quite general in nature and that future requests for feedback should drill down a little more into the issues being addressed. However, the results of the first public meeting served to indicate that the project is generally on a track that people agree with. PC members noted that they hope to get a broader cross-section of the population responding to requests for input, including reaching out to teenagers.

Alice spoke of the Waterbury revitalization efforts, including a growth in events and venues, and the benefits for both local residents and tourists.

AnnMarie noted that another key point made in the comments received was the importance of keeping the farmers' market active, even when the current location is no longer needed as a septic area. It was agreed that this needs to be part of the discussion, with it first being determined if the current location is the most appropriate.

Bob spoke of the importance of addressing the entire area, and not working to simply present a welcoming Main Street façade.

7. Alice Update

Alice reported that she is on the Act 250 Review committee, and that the group has been actively reviewing applications.

Climate Action Plan – the current work is focused on putting together actions and strategies based upon the work of the various task forces; equity and justice considerations are critical to this work, and Alice suggested that these should apply to Waitsfield's planning as well. Housing requirements will include that the underserved population is considered heavily, as well as the structures themselves being resilient to excess heat and other climate-related impacts if developers hope to qualify for funding.

Regional plan – Alice reported that new FEMA maps will be available for her to present at an upcoming meeting, noting that there are changes to the zones included, and that the new maps have more a more refined definition of the topography. She explained that the Energy chapter is taking a bit of effort due to changing regulations, and that there have been discussions focusing on flood mitigation and public health issues. She confirmed that the Section 248 training for which a link was included in the meeting packet will be recorded, and stressed the importance of this material for PC members.

8. Wastewater Planning Project Update

JB noted that information should be received soon regarding the USDA Rural Development grant application outcome. He also reported that Waitsfield's project is ranked the highest fund-seeking project on CDEDC's priority list. This ranking, in turn, will assure higher scoring on the Northern Borders Regional Commission Catalyst Program grant application due to be completed in early spring.

Bob indicated that engineering meetings will continue, with more material to develop and refine, hopefully resulting in some cost reductions.

9. Other Business

Jonathan reported that there was positive input regarding both the recent Irasville and Route 100 Multi-Use Path community input sessions. He also noted that FEMA paperwork is underway for both Waitsfield and Fayston, covering the July 2024 flooding event.

JB reviewed the upcoming topics to be covered in January PC meetings, particularly review of the Limited Business District uses.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary