

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 17, 2024

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

Members Absent: Emma Hanson

Staff Present: JB Weir, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Others Present:

II. Regular Business

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 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

AnnMarie noted that she had some information to present in the Other Business portion of the meeting.

3. Public Forum

No members of the public were present.

4. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of December 3, 2024 were amended and approved.

The Minutes of December 17, 2024 were amended and approved.

5. Groundwater Protection Overlay

JB reported that he had received legal advice indicating that individual notification of property owners of parcels located in/adjacent to the Overlay was not necessary. JB also provided a draft of the accompanying report, which was reviewed at the meeting, with no changes proposed. He noted that the Selectboard had been provided with a copy of the Overlay language, and outlined the adoption process, noting the logistics he will be handling. The PC's public hearing on the matter is scheduled for February 18, 2024.

6. Village Master Planning

No Steering Committee (SC) meeting had been held since the last PC meeting, so there was little to report. Jonathan and AnnMarie will continue to coordinate FPF postings; so far just a few responses have been received following the recent request for comments.

AnnMarie mentioned that SE Group will be undergoing a basic feasibility study regarding development of a pool/community center.

Alex of SE Group had provided an update via email, noting that the team is holding internal meetings regarding the conceptual design, and that the next SC meeting will focus on reviewing the conceptual sketches provided and planning for the next public input meeting.

7. Alice Update

Alice reported on several activities of the committees she is involved with.

The Regional Plan chapters are not yet ready for review by Planning Commissions. Alice did provide a copy of the recently reviewed Washington Town Plan, where the full process of RPC review is outlined. She noted that new requirements for the next iteration of the Waitsfield plan will include addressing flood resilience, disaster recovery, and climate change impacts. The latter will include more emphasis on how to cope with those impacts rather than outlining preventative measures. Mental health services are also being discussed as Plan inclusions, and there are continuing discussions regarding creating cooperative solutions among towns.

The Public Health Task Force work for the Climate Action Plan has been completed. Data has been gathered, and the chapter is now being drafted. One item Alice noted is that the draft will potentially call for a moratorium on biomass use for fuel due to air quality implications.

Alice intends to be working on River Corridor Bylaws; she will team up with Becca, with assistance from Brian Voigt and Stacey Pomeroy (DEC).

Keith Cubbin has been looking into gathering engineering quotes for Meadow Road Bridge work.

8. Wastewater Planning Project Update

JB reported that a meeting is on the schedule for January 8, and that technical boring work is ongoing. He explained that he, Joshua Schwartz, and Chach Curtis had attended a helpful roundtable with representatives of various towns; the three spent most of their time with the funding resource team. JB further outlined upcoming funding possibilities and other networking opportunities. An interview with Chach was aired on WCAX last week.

The final design work continues; it is anticipated that it will be wrapped up by early summer.

Alice noted that a Clean Water Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for the coming week; on the agenda is an item related to planning for an upcoming community wastewater assistance presentation where both large and small installations will be covered.

9. PC Work Plan 2025

The current work plan was reviewed, with agreement that the biggest continuing priority is the Irasville Master Planning process, with river corridor bylaws also to be addressed in the near future.

JB then reviewed the table of items still to be considered by the group. These include cannabis regulations, consideration of changes to the Limited Business District, and other potential bylaw amendments. It was noted that any work on STRs should wait until Warren completes their process of initiating an ordinance and following through with registration, as this will provide further insight on ways to address the matter. Jonathan asked that members provide suggestions for other topics to be covered. Alice noted that she had heard comments regarding the benefits of increasing PC/DRB communications.

Town Plan revisions were discussed. It was noted that a revision is needed before the standard eight-year requirement timeline, as there were deficiencies noted by the RPC in the Child Care and Energy Plan sections of the version approved and adopted in October 2023. AnnMarie suggested that the Housing chapter also be updated to ensure the Plan is in compliance with the HOME Act,

and to include anti-displacement language. Alice pointed out that the Regional Plan will also be providing housing numbers for towns as well as some other information.

10. Other Business

AnnMarie provided a summary of a recent workshop she attended titled 'Navigating Vermont's Climate Risk and Building Resilience.' The event was hosted by the non-profit Rebuild By Design as well as the Vermont Council for Rural Development. AnnMarie spoke of the participation by CROS (Community Resilience Organizations), and their work in assisting with needed organization of volunteers and other assistance following disasters. This group is advocating for an increase in State staff to help in these situations. She also mentioned that a need for anti-displacement policies was discussed at the workshop, which in rural areas is likely to focus on loss of farmland, gentrification, and related aspects of development. Creation of adequate social infrastructure mechanisms for providing information after a disaster was also a topic of discussion. Alice noted that much of this information as it relates to Waitsfield is included in the LEMP and LHMP; AnnMarie indicated that she will speak with Fred Messer regarding putting together some general information and making it readily available to the public.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary