



# WAITSFIELD PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

September 17, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

## Planning Commission

Beth Cook  
Robert Cook  
Emma Hanson  
AnnMarie Harmon, Vice-  
Chair  
Becca Newhall  
Alice Peal  
Jonathan Ursprung, Chair

**THE PLANNING COMMISSION WILL BE HOLDING A HYBRID MEETING. THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND IN PERSON AT WAITSFIELD TOWN HALL OR REMOTE VIA ZOOM WITH TELEPHONE AND/OR VIDEO ACCESS. THOSE PARTICIPATING MAY SPEAK DURING THE DESIGNATED PERIODS.**

To join the meeting remotely, use this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9190265312>

**Meeting ID:** 919 026 5312

**Or call:** 1 929 205 6099

## Planning & Zoning Administrator

J. B. Weir

## Town Administrator

Vacant

## Town Clerk

Jennifer Peterson

## Town Treasurer

Vacant

## Waitsfield Town Office

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1. **CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**
2. **REVISIONS TO AGENDA, IF ANY (5 +/- min)**
3. **PUBLIC FORUM (10 +/- min)**
4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 3, 2024 (10 +/- min)**
5. **MRVPD WELL-BEING SURVEY PRESENTATION (30 +/- min) Sam**
6. **ALICE UPDATE (15 +/- min)**
  - a. CVPRC
  - b. Climate Action Plan
  - c. LHMP
7. **VILLAGE MASTER PLANNING (30 +/- min) AnnMarie/JB/**
8. **WASTEWATER PLANNING PROJECT UPDATE (10 +/- min) JB/Bob**
9. **OTHER BUSINESS (10+/-min)**
10. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Waitsfield Planning and Zoning Administrators Report  
Planning Commission September 17, 2024 meeting**

**5. MRVPD Community Wellbeing Survey Presentation**

Sam Robinson of the Planning District will be in attendance to discuss the survey results. The report can be found [here](#).

**7. Village Master Planning (MPG)**

Members of the Steering Committee met with Alex on 8/27 to discuss the concerns about scope as presented by Sean Lawson. Alex shared that SE Group already had an internal meeting about the scope of the project's wetlands deliverable, which somewhat aligned with Sean's concerns as discussed at last PC meeting. Alex has drafted a memo concerning the shifting approach on the wetlands deliverable. The memo is included in the packet for review.

The next meeting of the Steering Committee is scheduled for September 24 at 10:30am. Alex will be attending the next meeting of the Planning Commission on October 1<sup>st</sup> to present the existing conditions analysis.

The PZA has been in discussions with the Skatium with regard to the board's capital campaign and vision for the future. Representatives of the Skatium board will be in attendance for the next steering committee meeting.

**8. Wastewater Planning Project Update**

Dubois & King continues to work on final design, as the amended Engineering Services Agreement has been submitted to CWSRF. Jon Ashley is updating the plans in the wake of the PZA and Robin Morris visiting with pump station landowners to discuss locations and easements. The firm is also working on completing the Environmental Assessment for the USDA RD grant, which is to be submitted early this upcoming winter. The PZA and Robin Morris have accumulated all necessary nonbonding connection agreements, as the last of them have trickled in over the last two weeks. The connection rate is outstanding.

The Town and CWSRF are working on agreement for remaining ARPA monies to be allotted to the Town. The award is just over \$2.5 million! This will allow for completion of final design, permitting, and likely the beginning of the construction of the disposal site. The original forecast was for an award of \$1 million. This is great news!

The Town will be setting its sights next on the regional project priority list compiled by Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (in conjunction with CVRPC). This ranking carries great weight in the application for Northern Borders Regional Commission grant funding, the application for which occurs in the spring.

The Town website page for the project has been updated and can be found [here](#).

## **9. Other Business**

The PZA has included in the packet the 2024 work plan. Jonathan may have an update on the MRVPD.

The Groundwater Protection Overlay standards have been submitted to the Town attorney for final review. Once returned, absent major changes, the PC can proceed with an official adoption timeline.

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Upcoming trainings/webinars: *None at this time.*

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Respectfully submitted,

J.B. Weir

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

**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 JB and Sean to cover these matters, and also confirmed that SE Group will be presenting at the October 1 PC meeting.

## **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

**TO:** Irasville Village Master Plan Steering Committee

**FROM:** Alex Belenz, Associate Community Planner, SE Group

**CC:** Tucker Gordon, Associate Environmental Analyst & Planner, SE Group

**DATE:** 9/13/2024

**RE:** Strategic Direction for the Irasville Master Plan

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## A. BACKGROUND

At the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Village Master Plan Steering Committee (VPMSC), there was discussion of the overall strategic direction of this planning effort, specifically as it relates to the role of wetlands in the project study area. At this meeting, SE Group presented a recommendation that the planning process focus on infill development strategies for areas in Irasville where wetlands are not present (i.e., a “wetlands avoidance” approach).

This recommendation was based primarily on the stated requirement of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) that any further wetlands impacts in Irasville must be accompanied by a plan for preserving and/or mitigating wetlands functions in the area. This recommendation was also based on our understanding of the location and flood mitigating functions of these wetland complexes (based on the 2021 wetlands mapping project conducted by Arrowwood Environmental), as well as our desktop analysis showing limited opportunities for local wetland mitigation/enhancement projects within the project study area (Irasville Village district and immediate surroundings). A broader exploration of potential offsetting wetlands improvement/flood mitigation projects in the Mad River Valley is beyond the scope and budgetary resources of this project.

Both during and following this meeting, feedback was received from VPMSC members expressing concerns with this approach. The Waitsfield Planning Commission (PC) spent a significant portion of their September 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting discussing this topic. The takeaways from this PC meeting were shared with the consultant team, the VPMSC “core team”, and MRVPD staff during a follow-up meeting on September 4<sup>th</sup>.

In summary, the PC communicated that it would like to see this planning process explore a broader vision for village vibrancy in Irasville, including the infill development possibilities that thoughtful planning around wetlands mitigation and enhancement could potentially unlock further down the road. This approach would be more reflective of the broader social and environmental context for this project, given Irasville’s identification as a local and regional growth center in the Waitsfield Town Plan, the significant investment by the Town of Waitsfield to deliver centralized wastewater service to the village, the village’s minimal flood risk, and an opportunity to focus future development in the Mad River Valley into sustainable development patterns and away from flood prone locations.

In providing this recommended approach, the PC was clear that addressing wetland function remains a high priority for the planning process.

## B. THE PROPOSED APPROACH

In receiving this feedback, we have proposed an approach for the remainder of the planning process that takes into consideration **different degrees of certainty** for redevelopment of different areas of Irasville. **Our process will result in a comprehensive vision for Irasville but will be clear about the level of certainty with which this vision can move forward for different areas.** This will necessarily inform the development of recommendations and next steps for the Town and its partners for delivering on the vision of an improved Irasville.

Areas of higher redevelopment certainty would include areas that are already cleared, improved, and/or developed and are largely free of natural constraints (e.g., wetlands, steep slopes, other sensitive habitats) where the Master Plan can present more prescriptive and actionable recommendations. Areas of low redevelopment certainty would

include areas where significant natural constraints are present (e.g., high functioning wetlands) and where the viability of future development would require additional study, planning, and/or permitting outcomes that would come subsequent to this Master Plan.

These generalized “areas of certainty” will be refined during the planning process in coordination with the VMPSC but are anticipated to generally fall along the following lines:

- **Higher certainty:** areas south of Mad River Canoe Rd and Slow Rd. These areas contain fewer wetlands and other natural constraints.
- **Moderate certainty:** area directly north of Mad River Canoe Rd and Slow Rd. This area contains lower functioning wetlands that are broken up/interspersed with existing development and infrastructure.
- **Lower certainty:** areas surrounding and north of Carroll Rd. This area contains significant wetlands complexes, including higher functioning wetlands.

In areas of higher certainty, the Master Plan can identify more precise and prescriptive action items and design concepts. In areas of lower certainty, the Master Plan will likely identify higher-level visions and desired future outcomes, as well as needed follow-up studies and/or planning efforts that can lend needed clarity for development opportunities/constraints and conservation priorities. Within all areas, the Master Plan will strive for to identify wetland protection priorities and identify other areas where further development should be limited or prohibited (e.g., steep slopes).

**The VPMSC will have an opportunity to discuss this proposed approach at its next meeting on September 24<sup>th</sup>.**



2024 Waitsfield Planning Commission Work Plan			
	Tasks	Project	Timeline
		<b>VILLAGE MASTER PLANNING</b>	
1	<b>Irasville Master Planning</b>	This project will incorporate the updated wetland maps and include a review of the history of planning in Irasville. Segue from the By-Laws Modernization Grant work and Wastewater project.	Begins May 8
		<b>Zoning and By-Laws</b>	
1	<b>GPOD</b>	Groundwater Protection Overlay District to be adopted to protect certain land radii around the Town aquifer off Reed Road. This is being done at the behest of the Water Commission. The PZA has drafted the ordinance for the overlay and it is currently under review by the Town attorneys.	Summer 2024 - in process
2	<b>Cannabis Land Use</b>	Land use regulation related to Act 164 (Cannabis Tax & Regulation). Cannabis cultivation, testing, warehousing, and distribution which are NOT opt-in and are also not regulated by the state as agriculture. Become familiar with the Cannabis Control Board regulations and how they affect towns.	<i>PZA recommends holding off</i>
3	<b>Limited Business District</b>	Reviewing standards and purpose. Numerous people have approached the PZA with regard to developing housing in this area. As it stands, residential development is deterred in this area. However, given the proximity to the Town's future disposal field, future phasing of the wastewater system could allow for	
4	<b>Additional Zoning Bylaws Amendments</b>	These should be guided by the most recent legislative updates as well as topics that have come up over the past few months that staff has been tracking (temporary ADUs, updates to the sign standards, definition of story, etc.). Short term rentals should be a part of this discussion. Tasks in Chapter 4 of Town Plan - Housing	
		<b>Town Plan</b>	
1	<b>Establish Framework for next Plan update</b>	What must be updated for next iteration? What should be updated? Do we hire a planning consultant?	
2	<b>Childcare</b>	Satisfy statutory requirements with regard to support of childcare	
3	<b>Energy Plan</b>	Satisfy requirements of updated Energy Plan standards	