

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 1, 2025

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

Members Absent:

Staff Present: JB Weir, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Others Present: Fred Messer

II. Regular Business

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 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

Nobody requested an opportunity to comment.

4. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of March 18, 2025 were approved.

5. Emergency Management Update

Fred provided some information regarding the need for local governments to respond to emergencies, and the importance of planning for these responses. He explained that Joshua and Sam of the MRVPD have taken on the role of providing damage assessment for the towns when necessary, the relationship between an emergency declaration and the provision of FEMA assistance, and the state guidelines which were implemented following the realization in the wake of Irene that more robust preparedness was necessary. These include participation in the National Flood Insurance Program, requirements for Road and Bridge Standards, and adoption by towns of a Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) and a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). Having current iterations of these documents adopted assists the Town logistically and financially, as they allow for a higher rate of disaster reimbursement from the State.

Fred noted that the LHMP includes sections related to preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation, and that some of the mitigation efforts included may be addressed by the PC. He and Alice recently worked with CVRPC to complete the update/adoption process for Waitsfield's LHMP.

Alice then reviewed the LHMP, noting that it contains various categories of emergencies, with specific emergency types ranked by their importance/potential impact on Waitsfield. Important situations included in the Plan were explained: the landslide along Mill Brook Road at the Fayston town line, which is on ANR's radar; culverts in critical need of upsizing/replacement; and the floodplain reconnection work for which a grant covering evaluation of the sites has been awarded. Alice pointed out other items included in the mitigation project table that did not rise to the top level of priority, but which are important to be addressed by the Town. She recommended that PC

members review the entire document, which contains a range of useful information; the Plan may be added to as needed, so suggestions for adjustments are welcome.

Fred reminded the group the VT Alert is the primary method he uses for disseminating information when there is an emergency occurring.

He also spoke of planning underway for the organization of volunteers when an emergency occurs, as well as his efforts in preparing for shelter, supplies, animal care, and so forth. Fred indicated that there are efforts being taken to create emergency management protocols for the MRV rather than continuing to address issues on a town by town basis; this is being undertaken with Rotary involvement and working in conjunction with the VEM center in Waterbury.

6. Village Master Planning

AnnMarie reported on the Steering Committee's review of the recently held public input session, which was attended by 70-80 people. She indicated that an important piece of information received was that the majority of responses indicate a preference for continuing efforts toward the plan with the highest density. Responses also point to a lack of desire for buildings with flat roofs, although three stories with pitched roofs had support.

It was discussed that there is an understanding that a goal of development of 70 new housing units is part of this planning effort; it was agreed that these do not need to all be located in Irasville, and that the general plan is for 'up to 70' being provided. Alice spoke of how this ties in with the RPC's future land use plan work and the housing targets which will be provided for each municipality.

AnnMarie continued her report, noting important points raised during Steering Committee review of the input session: addressing how to implement the Plan, furthering integration of the Skatium parcel, ensuring balance of wetland impacts/restoration, emphasizing traffic calming – including clarity on pedestrian/bicycle access, allowing for on street parking, and providing for mixed use development.

Other points raised by PC members included consideration of the need for a Fire Department ladder truck, Route 100 traffic speeds, coordination with the Active Transportation Corridor work, and the need for senior housing.

AnnMarie explained that a follow up survey will be developed; no further public input open houses are planned.

JB spoke of the potential for rehabbing/restoring some parcels serving as wetlands, and also of the information he has gleaned from his visit to and conversations with Saint Albans.

AnnMarie outlined the next steps to be undertaken by the Steering Committee/SE Group:

- Focus on implementation strategies
- Tools and planning documentation, exploration of regulatory land use efforts
- Coordination with wastewater project/infrastructure needs
- Exploration of TIFF, LOT mechanisms
- Wetland strategies

- Ensuring connection with the Active Transportation Corridor

She noted that all information will be posted on the Irasville Planning website.

7. Wastewater Planning Project Update

JB reported that funding pre-applications/applications have been submitted or are being completed for the Vermont Community Development Block Grant Program and the Northern Borders program; he is also navigating the USDA funding complexities, as there are programs within that Department that may be suitable for the project. He is also waiting to hear the final word on whether Waitsfield will be receiving a portion of the funds initially awarded to Greensboro.

Bob noted that the technical team is kicking off the fine details of some of the design work.

8. Other Business

Alice noted that:

- The substation upgrade is under Act 250 review and moving along.
- An RPC representative will likely be in attendance at a May meeting to discuss the Future Land Use section of the Regional Plan.
- The Regional Plan deadlines include having a draft document available in September and the final adoption process to take place in late 2026.
- The Regional Plan, as well as Waitsfield's Selectboard, will be addressing short-term rentals in the coming months; the PC is likely to have a role in this effort.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary