

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 20, 2025

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

Members Absent: Beth Cook

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

Nobody requested an opportunity to comment.

4. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of May 6, 2025 were amended and approved.

During the discussion of the minutes, there was a conversation about data that might be collected or surveys put in place to gather more information about residents and short-term rentals.

5. Irasville Master Plan

AnnMarie reported on a steering committee that had been held with Shannon Morrison regarding how to move forward with more consolidated wetland planning and the potential for a second phase of master planning to focus on the wetland's issues associated with Irasville development. AnnMarie outlined that there were three main aspects planned for discussion, but that the group generally was looking to receive some guidance on where they should next place their focus, and some recommendations for how to move forward. The three topics covered were the sharing of village center design objectives, the presentation of draft wetland conservation and enhancement strategies, and the sharing of future development scenarios in Irasville.

AnnMarie then summarized the meeting, noting that Alex (SE Group) also made a point to cover that Irasville is part of bigger picture framework as a focal point for the MRV, not just for Waitsfield, and that the focus of the planning is primarily on flood resilience, but also with some emphasis on providing recreation opportunities in the area. Alex had outlined that there are three things necessary for implementation of the project: additional studies of local and regional wetlands, development of an understanding of how zoning regulations or other regulatory tools can help, and understanding what the relationship is between ANR and this master planning work.

Shannon explained that, when impacting wetlands, a developer might make payments through the Army Corps in order to gain the ability to impact wetlands, or might provide enhancement/creation

of wetlands in order to balance the damage caused by development. She recommended reaching out to Mike Adams of the Army Corps in order to learn more, and offered to assist with that connection. Shannon pointed out that enhancing the wetlands at the corner of Carroll Road and Route 100 and those on Sean Lawson's property would be a good step, but would not be enough of a positive impact to balance out the potential development planned for. Shannon also outlined that ANR's overriding priority is avoiding the potential impacts of infill development on downstream flooding along the main stem of the Mad River, and noted that if it can be demonstrated that identified projects and actions will mitigate the loss of flood retention function, then ANR would be willing to partner with the Town on the project.

Following the meeting, SE Group staff summarized the guidance they had heard from Shannon, and outlined some of the work that will need to be completed in order to follow through. These tasks could be included in a second phase of Irasville planning, and include collecting data to demonstrate the connection between the wetlands and flood prevention. A follow up hydraulic study would help identify the scope of wetland mitigation needs. Alex also explained that Shannon had spoken of a pathway to partnership with ANR for future wetlands permitting being the identification of major creation/enhancement projects as a foundational step to a master agreement between ANR and the Town. AnnMarie noted that she is under the impression that Shannon needs to see completed projects and to not simply have projects identified; Jonathan noted that this would be completion of projects undertaken through working with the Army Corps. He also explained that Shannon had appeared to indicate that ANR might provide some leeway if projects have been identified and are partially underway, but that the conversation had been an introductory discussion and further discussions with ANR are needed.

Shannon specifically referred to the channelized runoff from the Food Hub/Skatium and bever pond area, and the need to disperse this type of runoff.

Jonathan noted that any impact payment required by the Army Corps needs to be made by the development applicant, and pointed out that determining responsible parties for projects is likely to be somewhat complicated. It was noted that third parties can pay in-lieu fees for development impacting wetlands and/or buffers.

During AnnMarie's report, several things were noted by other PC members, including:

- New wetlands mapping is being created with lidar, and will include indications of wetlands that need restoration.
- It may be useful for the group to ask Rebecca Diehl – UVM professor and fluvial geomorphologist - to attend a meeting to discuss the flood resiliency and master planning, as she is able to provide a lot of useful information.
- Upstream work along the Mill Brook and other tributaries may be beneficial and would likely involve cooperation with Fayston.
- SLR Consulting has hydrologic study capability and experience in remediating wetlands, and might be a useful organization to connect with.

There was also a discussion of culverts in Town, the upcoming culvert inventory update, and impacts of the prior weekend's flash flooding. Jonathan noted that the MRVPD will be working on documents

for mutual aid cooperation between the towns in these types of events, as well as appropriate road policy language for replacing private culverts in emergency situations.

Bob noted what he felt were the priorities in Alex's report, with the last sentence as being the most important and the last bullet point being second. He also spoke of potential bureaucratic hurdles in working with the Army Corps, and determining who is the best person to work with. There was a discussion of potential contacts in this area.

JB noted that he will attach to the minutes some of the communication referred to.

6. CVRPC Update

Alice reported on the following:

- The deteriorating condition of the Meadow Road Bridge, and that there are also issues with the Trembley Road bridge decking that need to be addressed
- A housing forum will begin meeting quarterly, including CVRPC representatives and others; the forums will include a presentation and breakout sessions
- An Act 250 letter has been issued regarding a GMP petition to upgrade their substation on Carroll Road. The site is near wetlands; no application for permits has been submitted yet.
- The Housing chapter of the Regional Plan is being written, and discussions have included infrastructure and the cost of building, along with potential incentives including public/private partnerships such as the CHIP (Community Housing Infrastructure Program) program currently included in S.127.
- Numbers are being developed for the RPC housing plan in future land use discussions, currently the projections for the area are that 3800 new units are needed in the region covered by the RPC, although that may be lowered. Sixty of those units are indicated as being Waitsfield's responsibility. The related Act 250 tiers discussion is also ongoing, with Tier 3 proving to be contentious due to the tension between natural areas and development.
- A recent Statewide Transportation Improvement Program meeting focused on a four-year plan for VTrans and allocation of predicted funding (which may end up being less than anticipated); the Route 100/17 intersection is currently included in the plan.
- Funding opportunities for addressing the Meadow Road bridge are still being sought.
- Governor Scott has reduced bike/ped funding.

7. Wastewater Planning Project Update

JB pointed to the information included in the meeting packet, including an update from Joshua Schwartz. He noted that there has been no award of Vermont Community Development Program funds, as that program is very underfunded, and that more funding request results will be available by the end of June. The project is currently in the final design phase, which is to be completed by January 31, 2026.

8. Other Business

MRVPD – Jonathan provided some updates from the most recent meeting:

- Mad Bus costs are going up significantly, Sugarbush will be proposing how to potentially share the increase with the towns. Looking at routes and determining ways to increase ridership will also be investigated.

- Wait House e-bikes are available for demo use.
- Community development opportunities were discussed, including future ownership of the Village Meeting House.
- A 40th anniversary event will likely be planned for later in the year.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary