

**TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT**  
**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, May 5, 2026**

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

**Members Absent:**

**Staff Present:** JB Weir, Zoning Administrator

**Others Present:** Lincoln Frasca (CVRPC), Alice Peal, Ned Swanberg (DEC), Rose Watts (DEC), Tessa Yip (DEC)

## **II. Regular Business**

### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Emma Hanson. 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 time to address the PC.

### **4. Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes of April 7, 2026 were amended and approved.

### **5. River Corridor Bylaws**

Alice introduced the presenters, noting that Lincoln had reviewed Waitsfield's Fluvial Erosion regulations and suggested changes necessary to implement those as a River Corridor Bylaw.

Lincoln outlined that the Town is in good shape, having documents in place to achieve the highest level of disaster relief; he explained that there is new data available and new legislation in place, which adoption of River Corridor Bylaws would be able to incorporate and keep the Town current. Lincoln indicated that the essential change needed to the language of the current regulations is inclusion of a requirement to increase first-floor elevation to 2' above base flood elevation (BFE).

Ned provided a presentation, for which he made the slides available, covering:

- Benefits of floodplains and their importance in the Mad River Valley
- The distinction between flood hazard areas and river corridors
- Bylaw aspects included in the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) model language
  - Prohibition on building closer to the waterway than existing structures
  - No new fill in mapped flood hazard areas
  - Lowest floor elevations required to be at least 2' above BFE
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plans and the emergency reimbursement (ERAF) rate
- History of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), related studies, and the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM)
- A review of the Waitsfield bylaw language adopted in 2010, which is still in place
  - Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone, established only for the Mad River

- Surface water protection standards for other streams, which may be difficult to enforce
- The need to consider erosive power of rivers and streams as well as flood height
  - A restricted river is more erosively powerful
- The river corridor is the minimal space needed for a river to find its least erosive path
- There are already structures in the corridor in Waitsfield, so model language requires that nothing be built closer than what exists
  - Depiction of examples of shadow area and infill area concepts and logistics

Ned then presented related maps, depicting the current Fluvial Erosion Hazard zone covered by Town regulations, River Corridors mapped by the State (which will likely be covered by State jurisdiction in coming years), and the mapped Corridors along with small streams that are within half-mile mapped watershed areas. The third map is what Ned and Lincoln are proposing be included in River Corridor bylaws to be adopted. He explained that protection of these corridors would provide for avoiding liability due to the costly damages that may be caused by new encroachments of stream channels cutting into river and stream banks.

Ned reported on the Flood Safety Act, for which the State is still developing rules and standards. These requirements will likely be embedded in Chapter 117, and will potentially be in place beginning January 1, 2028. He noted that DEC has an updated template for use in drafting River Corridor bylaws, and Lincoln explained that language should be drafted in such bylaws to acknowledge and accept any upcoming changes from the State, such as referencing “current DEC standards.”

Alice and Lincoln spoke of area floodplain restoration projects, including Randell field in Waterbury and the Waitsfield Fairgrounds area.

Ned explained why dredging of rivers is problematic, noting that such efforts do not increase the amount of space available in a river’s floodplains and that lowering the channel level may undermine existing structures. He explained that efforts such as widening the span of bridges help to keep rivers moving faster and thus create less sediment build up. Ned also indicated that the sand and cobble which builds up above a river’s surface level may be removed; a permit needs to be issued for this work, and it typically is a large-expense project.

Lincoln noted that it should be determined if the Selectboard has adopted updated VTrans road standards.

PC members confirmed that this topic will be discussed further at an upcoming meeting.

## **6. CHIP**

AnnMarie had provided a written summary of the CHIP program; she explained that the Master Plan work supports a CHIP application, and noted that many of the preparation steps necessary have been completed. She reported that she and JB had determined that areas outside Irasville may be included in the application.

JB highlighted that he is working with Mark MacGregor to put together a CHIP proposal/application, noting that they were discussing the inclusion of several properties with the potential for a total of around 150 dwelling units to be developed.

JB noted that he and AnnMarie will continue working on CHIP related matters, and pointed out that a Master Plan Implementation Committee might best put efforts toward design plans such as streetscapes, walkability, and so forth.

### **7. Town Plan Update**

JB had drafted additional language regarding child care; it was agreed that the only change necessary was to include noting that NOW is a non-profit organization. JB will outline the approval timeline, and it was agreed to warn a public hearing for adoption of the revised Plan for the June 16 PC meeting.

### **8. Short Term Rental (STR) Discussion**

Emma indicated that further review would take place once feedback has been received from Joshua Schwartz. JB noted that there may be some Selectboard concern regarding not having a data collection aspect/period incorporated.

### **9. Wastewater Planning Project Update**

JB reported that

- 90% design is complete, and the project will be going out to bid
- An easement list has been created, and attorneys will begin drafting documents
- Robin Morris is reviewing design flows
- Robin is also working on a draft ordinance
- No Congressionally directed spending was allotted this year
- USDA loan term changes may preclude using those funds; financing is being reviewed

### **10. Other Business**

PC Vacancy – Emma noted that she knows of an individual who may be interested in joining the PC.

### **10. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary