

**TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT**  
**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, February 7, 2023**

**Members Present:** Kevin Anderson, Bob Cook, Emma Hanson (online), AnnMarie Harmon (online), Alice Peal (online), Brian Voigt (online)

**Members Absent:** Steve Shea

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

**Others Present:** Phil Huffman, Duncan Brines, Robin Morris, Chach Curtis

**II. Regular Business.**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm. 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.**

Alice noted that a discussion with SE Group will not be part of agenda, it was agreed to move this item to the next meeting.

**3. Public Forum.**

There was nobody present requesting to address the Commission.

**4. Public Hearing: 2023 Draft Town Plan**

Alice opened the Public Hearing and provided some background information regarding the proposed updates to the Plan.

Robin Morris reviewed some of his written comments, which he had provided to the PC, noting some outdated data and discrepancies in goal language. PC members pointed out that only several specific chapters were updated for this iteration, and explained that the Bylaw Modernization project is taking a look at some of the issues pointed out by Robin.

Chach Curtis provided some comments regarding the Energy chapter, noting that some assumptions and data presented were too conservative and suggesting that more alternative energy use be encouraged and possibly incentivized or required. Kevin explained that much of the data included was provided by CVRPC, and that there are new State requirements regarding Energy standards that were not required to be included in this update. It was also indicated that, while the Plan outlines goals, specific actions are taken through the Land Use Regulations and other project areas.

Phil Huffman provided comments regarding Chapter 11, first noting that some of the map numbering and sequencing is confusing, and that associated references in the text are not always accurate. In written comments submitted prior, Phil also suggested changes with regard to invasive species and the use of chemicals thereon.

Phil also spoke of Primary Conservation Areas and the lack of inclusion of Tier One Forest Blocks in this category, although the characteristics of both are quite similar. He suggested that he and Brian reconvene with Jens Hilke and Jamey Fidel to review this again to determine any potential changes that would clarify things. He noted that the bulleted list of sites unsuitable for energy development

also did not include Tier One blocks, and offered that this could be discussed by the working group as well. Brian spoke of needing to ensure that restricting such a large area from alternative energy development would still allow for meeting targets.

Additionally, Phil suggested reviewing language in Chapter 9 related to hydro dams, noting that only micro dams are potentially viable and that a caveat be included regarding checking potential development types with preferred sites and unsuitable areas. Kevin agreed that this would be an appropriate change to the language.

Finally, Phil asked that references to 'travel corridors' on page 9-27 be changed to 'habitat connectors' as that is the term generally used for these areas.

Duncan Brines offered some thoughts related to finding a balance between some of the capital-intensive goals outlined in the plan and the need to ensure affordability for local residents, noting that there are many who are unable to afford the costs of certain infrastructure, even with the many programs that exist to help with related costs. Discussion was also had as to the Inflation Reduction Act.

Alice explained that many of the points raised are topics for discussion during the next iteration of the Plan, and thanked all those who participated for their feedback. She then closed the Public Hearing portion of the meeting.

## **5. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of January 17, 2023 were amended and approved.

## **6. Other Business**

a. Wastewater and Water Project Update – Alice reported that the ESA has been approved by DEC, and that loan approval appears to be forthcoming. JB is working on ensuring that Waitsfield is included in the Project Priority List, and noted that the related documentation should be available for Selectboard approval at their next meeting. Alice explained some of the Census Bureau distinctions she had learned of, which provide data for segments of Waitsfield, and noted that the Census Designated Place which includes Irasville and the Village areas has associated data that meets the income requirements for upcoming funding requests. This has led to DEC's deciding that an NDA designation will no longer be required for funding purposes. She indicated that discussions regarding NDA will continue with the SE group, however.

b. MRVPD Update - PC members expressed that hiring a second staff member is critical for accomplishing the work of PD. There were also concerns noted regarding the Steering Committee's need to establish a prioritization of projects and goals; important work items noted were housing targets and where they should be located as well as addressing short-term rentals and their impacts on housing. It was acknowledged that some changes to the work plan will be needed with Joshua's involvement in the Water and Wastewater project.

## **8. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary