



WAITSFIELD PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

March 19, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission

Vacant, Vice-Chair

Beth Cook

Robert Cook

Emma Hanson

AnnMarie Harmon

Alice Peal, Chair

Jonathan Ursprung

Planning & Zoning Administrator

J. B. Weir

Town Administrator

Annie Decker-Dell'Isola

Town Clerk

Jennifer Peterson

Town Treasurer

Randy Brittingham

Waitsfield Town Office

4144 Main Street

Waitsfield, VT 05673

(802) 496-2218

www.waitsfieldvt.us

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

1. **CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**
2. **REVISIONS TO AGENDA, IF ANY (5 +/- min)**
3. **PUBLIC FORUM (5 +/- min)**
4. **ANNUAL REORGANIZATION (10 +/- min)**
5. **CVRPC PRESENTATION (30 +/- min)**
6. **VILLAGE MASTER PLANNING (25 +/- min) AnnMarie/JB**
 - a. Submittal Update
 - b. Steering Committee
7. **NDA DESIGNATION UPDATE (5 +/- min) JB**
8. **WASTEWATER PLANNING PROJECT UPDATE (10 +/- min) JB/Bob**
9. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 20, 2023 (5 +/- min)**
10. **PC VACANCY (5 +/- min)**
11. **OTHER BUSINESS (20+/-min)**
 - a. Act 250 Update
12. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Waitsfield Planning and Zoning Administrators Report
Planning Commission March 19, 2024 meeting**

4. Annual Reorganization

Members must elect a new Chair and Vice-Chair for the upcoming year. In addition, members need to reaffirm the meeting days and time, as well as reaffirm the places of publication (Valley Reporter, Town office, Town website, USPO, and the Village Grocery).

6. Village Master Planning (MPG)

Included in the packet are draft questions for the consultants who will be interviewed for the Village Master Planning project. There are three total submittals: Dubois & King, SE Group and Regrowth Planning. The questions are not complete. Please review the RFQ and provide any additional questions you think should be asked.

The PZA and Ms. Harmon met on March 14 to discuss the steering committee that will oversee this project. The committee will consist of PC members Ms. Harmon and Ms. Cook, along with Sean Lawson, Mac Rood, Brian Shupe, Kaziah Haviland, and either Ira Shadis or Luke Foley of Friends of the Mad River. The RFQ for the project is again included in the packet for a reminder of the pending interview process, key dates and proposed project milestones.

At the April 2 meeting, the PZA will include the summaries of the consultant submittals for commissioners' review. The Steering Committee will conduct interviews of three consultants the week of April 15.

7. Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) Designation

Jacob Hemmerick from ACCD has reviewed our draft NDA application. His only requests were to include the river corridor on the mapping and to submit a clearer map of the proposed NDA boundary. Sam Robinson of the MRVPD made those changes and the application has been finalized for review at the March 25th meeting of the Downtown Board. The meeting will be held from 1-4:00pm and is *virtual only*. At least one representative from the Planning Commission should attend, along with the PZA. The board packet will be finalized early next week and Jacob will get me additional details then. Here is the Board webpage, with dates and links: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs/downtown-development-board>.

In an email to the PZA, Jacob Hemmerick noted that he will be voting in favor of the designation!

8. Wastewater Planning Project Update

Joshua Schwartz's final Wastewater Planning Project Update (#9) is included in the packet. With Joshua currently on sabbatical and the Town Administrator transitioning away from her position, the PZA, Robin Morris and Chach Curtis are taking the reins on the project until April 1 when Annie Decker Dell'Isola takes on the part time position of project manager for 20-25 hours a week. The PZA and Mr. Morris have been reaching out to the landowners of the priority service parcels over the last few weeks. The responses have been overwhelmingly positive and verbal commitments have been given for almost 70% of the 65,000 gpd of capacity set to be allocated to priority users!

The PZA, along with Robin Morris and Jon Ashley are working on the USDA RD application for submittal by April 12. The PZA has been in contact with Senators Sanders and Welch's office with regard to CDS applications, which should be open by the end of April.

There are only 88 days to the bond vote as of this writing! Please review the flyer for the project and be able to rattle off key points to your friends and neighbors as we approach June 11.

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

The story map page is online! Visit that page [here](#). This was done by Joshua Schwartz and Sam Robinson of the MRVPD.

10. PC Vacancy

The PZA has included in the packet a draft advertisement for the Planning Commission vacancy resulting from Mr. Anderson's completion of his term. Once approved by the board, the PZA will get this published in the Valley Reporter

11. Other Business

The PZA has included a pdf of an email from the Vermont Planning Listserv. The email provides a look into current legislation regarding Act 250 and extrapolations on provisions of the HOME Act.

Upcoming trainings/webinars:

Open Meeting Law for Boards and Committees

Every municipal board, council, commission, and committee (see examples listed below) is a “public body” and is therefore required to comply with Vermont’s Open Meeting Law. Learn – or review – the basic requirements of the law, including:

public notice and creating an agenda
managing public participation
taking and posting meeting minutes

The requirements of the temporary provisions enacted in 2024 allowing remote and hybrid meetings will also be discussed.

This training is critical for elected and appointed members of all statutory municipal boards, commissions, and committees listed below – and also all committees appointed by selectboards and other legislative bodies. Due to the great variety of locally appointed public bodies, the following lists are not exhaustive, but they do include most of the groups included in Vermont Statutes.

Legislative (Governing) Bodies*

Board of Aldermen
City Council
Board of Village Trustees
Prudential Committee
Selectboard
Boards

Board of Abatement
Board of Auditors
Board of Civil Authority
Board of Listers
Development Review Board
Library Trustees
Trustees of Public Funds
Zoning Board of Adjustment
Commissions

Conservation Commission
Planning Commission
Committees

ARPA Committee
Budget Advisory Committee
Recreation Committee

Others by statute or appointed by selectboards (and other legislative bodies)

* Legislative bodies can also learn about Open Meeting Law requirements as part of the Selectboard Essentials in-person event on March 23, 2024.

Presenters

Kail Romanoff, Staff Attorney I, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center

Register [here](#).

An Introduction to Vermont's Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants

Did you know that the Vermont Natural Heritage Inventory maps and monitors about 600 rare and uncommon plant species across the state? Join State Botanist Grace Glynn for a fun glimpse into some of our rare plants, where they're found on the landscape, and the ongoing work to conserve them. Learn more about what towns can do to better protect these important pieces of our state's natural heritage.

Presenters:

Grace Glynn, Botanist, VT Fish and Wildlife Department

Jens Hilke, Conservation Planner, VT Fish and Wildlife Department

Repeat sessions of this webinar will be offered on the following two dates:

Session 2: Tuesday, April 16th, 2024, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Register [here](#).

Using BioFinder 4.0: A step by step introduction to using this updated webmap

The BioFinder website is an online map and database that allows users to explore the patterns of habitat distribution that most impact Vermont's biodiversity. It hosts the Vermont Conservation Design data – all components of a complete vision for maintaining ecological function to secure our natural heritage for future generations. The Biofinder website was just updated to BioFinder 4.0 and while the functionality is nearly identical to the previous version, now is the perfect time to learn how to better use this multi-faceted tool. Join us and improve your skills in using

BioFinder. This webinar will focus on the functionality of the webmap itself. To learn more about the data behind the maps displayed on BioFinder, be sure to join an upcoming "Understanding Vermont Conservation Design" webinar.

Presenters:

David Moroney, Conservation Planning Specialist, VT Fish and Wildlife Department

Jens Hilke, Conservation Planner, VT Fish and Wildlife Department

Repeat sessions of this webinar will be offered on the following three dates:

Session 1: Monday, March 25th, 2024 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. [Register](#)

Session 2: Thursday April 11th 2024, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. [Register](#)

Session 3: Tuesday, May 14th, 2024, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. [Register](#)

Understanding Vermont Conservation Design: The data behind BioFinder

Vermont Conservation Design is the data and the vision that powers the BioFinder website. It is a prioritization tool that identifies the lands and waters most important for maintaining Vermont's ecologically functional landscape – one that conserves current biological diversity and allows species to move and shift in response to climate and land-use changes. Vermont Conservation Design allows users to see patterns in Vermont's forests and waterways, and identify the places that connect both into a functional network. The Design was just updated with new landscape scale components and Wildlife Road Crossings. It now features more accurate edges of the habitat blocks, that allow for a better understanding of the pattern and network of connected forests. Join us to learn more about this important conservation science.

Presenters:

Jens Hilke, Conservation Planner, VT Fish and Wildlife Department

David Moroney, Conservation Planning Specialist, VT Fish and Wildlife Department

Repeat sessions of this webinar will be offered on the following three dates:

Session 1: Thursday, March 21st, 2024, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. [Register](#)

Session 2: Thursday, April 4th, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. [Register](#)

Session 3: Tuesday, April 30th, 2024, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. [Register](#)

Resilient Rivers: Good for fish and people

Fish and other aquatic organisms face threats from development as well as increasing frequency and intensity of floods and droughts and rising temperatures. Restoring rivers to natural

conditions will help ensure the long-term survival of aquatic organisms, and has co-benefits for water quality and flood resilience. This talk will highlight three areas where municipalities can help protect aquatic habitats: forested riparian areas, aquatic organism passage, and log jams. Join VFWD Aquatic Habitat Biologist Will Eldridge to learn how allowing rivers to function naturally where it is safe to do so is more effective and more sustainable in the long run.

Presenters:

Will Eldridge, Aquatic habitat Biologist, VT Fish and Wildlife Department

Jens Hilke, Conservation Planner, VT Fish and Wildlife Department

Repeat sessions of this webinar will be offered on the following two dates:

Session 2: Tuesday, April 9th, 2024 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. [Register](#)

Getting to Know Act 250

Join CVRPC on Thursday, March 21, from 6:00 to 7:30 PM, when the Natural Resources Board will provide an overview and introduction to Act 250, the state's land use and development law. Staff from the NRB will walk you through the essentials of Act 250, including when Act 250 applies and when it does not; the permitting process (including town and regional planning participation), answer general questions, and point you toward resources for additional information.

This is not a discussion about proposed changes that are currently being discussed at the State House, rather an informational presentation and discussion about Act 250 process currently.

We will be offering both remote and in person options to participate – details available at: <https://centralvtplanning.org/about/minutes-agendas-staff-reports/board-of-commissioners/>

Respectfully submitted,

J.B. Weir

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

**Environmental Consultant / Municipal Planning Professional
is requested for a Village Master Plan for Irasville, Vermont
Waitsfield, Vermont
[FEBRUARY 14, 2024]
RFQ Due on [MARCH 15, 2024]**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Overview

This project is to create a Village Master Plan for Irasville, with the goal of increasing housing, improving natural resources and increasing resilience against a changing climate. The Village Master Plan will include current conditions, community attitudes, identification of wetland enhancements, realistic design scenarios, and next steps for phased revitalization and resilience.

Context and Background

Waitsfield's Town Plan identifies Irasville as the growth area for the Mad River Valley, accommodating the majority of new residential and commercial development in a traditional VT village form.

The lack of municipal infrastructure, coupled with the lack of an integrated stormwater management and wetlands approach, has resulted in a fragmented development pattern and limited capacity to accommodate growth.

The town has recently made substantial progress on a variety of stumbling blocks keeping Irasville from realizing its potential:

- Municipal water system installed in '12
- Municipal wastewater system planning is currently underway, final design in '24
- Irasville Wetlands Analysis, '21

Building off this progress, as well as leveraging lessons learned from the town's previous Irasville visioning efforts, the town is well positioned to undertake a process focused on two overarching objectives: 1) enhance Irasville's absorptive capacity while also meeting municipal goals; 2) enable and promote Irasville's development as a compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-oriented growth center.

Extensive conversations with our region's DEC Wetlands Ecologist have resulted in an understanding of the key role that Irasville's existing wetlands complex plays in flood storage,

water quality improvement, and more. In a time of climate change-induced weather patterns, their role is increasing in significance. Waitsfield is committed to utilizing the lessons of its 2021 Wetlands Analysis to guide master planning, focusing first and foremost on how to enhance and support the functioning of Irasville’s wetlands complex. The town is fully committed to evolving Irasville’s automobile-centric development pattern into a bustling pedestrian-oriented growth center while also increasing the natural functioning of its landscape.

Funding

A total of \$49,990 is available for consultant services from the Municipal Planning Grant Program administered by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Work Plan

The overarching objectives of the Irasville Master Planning project are to enhance the landscape’s absorptive capacity while also meeting municipal goals that enable and promote the development of a compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-oriented growth center. We aim for a future Irasville that is home to the bulk of the Mad River Valley’s housing and commercial needs at a pedestrian scale, resulting in a critical mass that supports a diversity of viable businesses in the village, as well as ample ridership for a commuter bus connecting Irasville to neighboring population centers. This future Irasville has a highly functioning environment where critical wetlands have been enhanced and storm water captured, intercepting rainwater that would otherwise end up in the Mad River and exacerbate flooding. The natural functions of the immediate landscape are understood, strengthened, and protected.

In order to achieve this projected future Irasville, we will need to start with a plan. The Irasville Master Plan will provide strategic recommendations for advancing the housing and mixed-use development of Irasville in a manner that increases the absorptive capacity of its wetlands. The project will include an engaged public process to ensure that the broad community envisions a future that’s mutually beneficial, as well as incorporate implementable design approaches that build off of the existing momentum.

The long-term outcome of this project is a more resilient Waitsfield, where the town’s long-standing commitment to smart-growth principles is realized, one that welcomes changing demographics, all in a location that is safe from, and minimizes the likelihood of flooding.

Proposed Timeframe

Contract Awarded, Proposed Start Date: May 1, 2024

Existing Conditions Analysis: May – July 2024

Community Development Goals: July – August 2024

Wetland Enhancement Opportunities: August – October 2024

Community Engagement: As appropriate May 2024 – August 2025

Design (including State Wetlands review): November 2024 – August 2025

Strategic Recommendations: November 1, 2025

Project Outline and Deliverables

0) Project Management - Project management activities including internal coordination, project communications, and invoicing.

1a) Existing Conditions Analysis - Summarize Conditions - Drawing from recent Vibrant Villages project, summarize relevant plans, reports, and data to describe current conditions in Irasville

1b) Existing Conditions Analysis - Base Map - Prepare base mapping of existing facilities, buildings, wetlands and other natural features

1c) Existing Conditions Analysis - Present Findings - Share findings to PC, Project Website, & Public Meeting Presentation

2a) Community Development Goals – Identify - Coordinate with Steering Committee, PC, & SB to identify specific development goals (consultant & staff)

2b) Community Development Goals – Articulate - Share goals and hear feedback from PC/SC (post to Project Website)

3a) Wetland Enhancement Opportunities – Identify - Based on existing Irasville wetland rankings (functions and values), identify areas for restoration, expansion, and encroachment (no site visit anticipated)

3b) Wetland Enhancement – Prioritize - Develop a prioritized list and map of wetland restoration, expansion, and encroachment

3c) Wetland Enhancement - Implementation - Identify responsible parties for wetland restoration, expansion, and easement holding.

4a) Community Engagement - Steering Committee - Develop and facilitate a project steering committee consisting of Planning Commission, Selectboard representative, PZA, and local stakeholders.

4b) Community Engagement – Website - Develop an informative and engaging project website that tells the context and story of prior planning efforts (including wastewater plans, flood resilience efforts, bylaw modernization)

4c) Community Engagement – Charrette - Informed by wetlands opportunities and constraints, host a design charrette to identify village design ideas and priorities for Irasville

4d) Community Engagement – Materials - Include educational materials and discussions as well as sketchwork and visioning exercises to articulate design vision and goals for Irasville

5a) Design - Charrette Refinement - Working with project advisory committee, refine initial design from charrette (anticipated at one overhead sketch and one perspective sketch).

5b) Design – Feedback - Put initial design into an online community survey to receive resident feedback

5c) Design - Design Refinement - Based on survey results and input from Steering Committee, refine and finalize design based on resident/committee feedback

6a) Strategic Recommendations - Prepare recommendations for advancing and implementing design and wetland considerations in Irasville, including bylaw changes, circulation, stormwater, wetland improvements, and wayfinding. Develop a concise, graphically-rich planning document.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All responses to the RFQ shall include the following information:

1. Cover Letter - A letter of interest for the project.
2. Statement of Qualifications and Staffing – Provide a qualifications profile of the lead consultant and sub-consultants, including indication of the lead consultant, the proposed role of each consultant on the team. Also provide detailed information on each consultant, including the name of the firm, year established, and contact information.
3. Summaries of relevant projects – Describe relevant experience on similar projects for each firm and list the work experience of the individuals expected to be involved in the project. Include a minimum of three (3) professional references for whom a similar project has been completed within the last ten (10) years.
4. Page Limit - The proposal, encompassing items 1-3 above, shall not exceed 15 double-sided pages (30 total pages) including cover letter, project lists and contacts.

All information submitted becomes property of the Town of Waitsfield, Vermont. The municipality of Waitsfield reserves the right to issue supplemental information or guidelines relating to the RFQ as well as make modifications to the RFQ or withdraw the RFQ.

Respondents should submit one (1) digital copy (PDF) and five (5) printed copies of the proposal by **March 15, 2024** to:

Town of Waitsfield
Attn: JB Weir, Planning & Zoning Administrator
4144 Main Street
Waitsfield, VT 05673

For questions, please contact JB Weir, Planning & Zoning Administrator, at (802) 496-2218 x 4, or via email at pza@gmavt.net. We will respond to all questions within 48 hours. Both the question and response will be shared with the other consultants.

Please expect a confirmation email upon receipt of the qualifications by the Town of Waitsfield.

Selection Process

Qualifications will be reviewed by a selection committee composed of representatives from *the Waitsfield Planning commission, Waitsfield Selectboard, and Waitsfield community-at-large*. A short- list of consultants will be selected to submit detailed proposals for the project with a project approach, scope of services, schedule and budget with details on staffing, hourly costs and overhead. Proposals will be presented in-person by the consultants at interviews.

RFQ Schedule Summary:

Qualifications due March 15, 2024.

Consultants selected for short-list: March 22, 2024

Interviews and Proposal Presentations: April 15 – April 19, 2024

Consultant selection by April 26, 2024

Project work to begin May 8, 2024

Complete project on or by November 30, 2025.

Evaluation of Qualifications

Respondents will be evaluated according to the following factors:

1. Consultant Qualifications (experience with similar projects, ability to work with municipalities to attain desired outcomes, and knowledge of the topic) - 85%
 - Experience with master planning and wetlands analysis
 - Ability to solicit input, build community engagement, and solve problems creatively.
 - Knowledge of infill development and natural resource protection
 - Understanding of current housing issues, resort communities and flood resilience.
 - Proven ability to work with committees and conduct public meetings
 - Availability to begin work on project start date
2. Quality, completeness and clarity of submission - 15%

Interview Framework

The Town of Waitsfield reserves the right to select the top three highly scored consultants and invite them for an interview. In this process, the selection committee may ask the respondents to give an oral presentation of their respective proposals. The purpose of this oral presentation is to provide an in-depth analysis of qualifications, experience in performing similar services, and an opportunity for the consultant to clarify or elaborate on their qualifications without restating the proposal.

The interview and presentation is merely to present facts and explanation to the review committee and allow the selection committee to ask targeted questions of the consultant team. The interview and presentation, if deemed necessary by the review committee, will be held at the Town Offices in

Waitsfield, Vermont and via Zoom. The day and time will be notified to the respondents **at least one week prior to the meeting**. All costs and expenses incurred in traveling for the purpose of interview and presentation shall be the responsibility of the consultant.

Final Consultant Selection

Following the selection process, one team will be selected to negotiate a final contract for services. The final scope of work with specified deliverables may be modified through negotiation of the final contract. The final project team may also be modified through negotiation of the final contract. Any expenses resulting from the interview and proposal process will be the sole responsibility of the consultant.

Contract Requirements

The consultant contract will be subject to the terms of Attachment D of the Municipal Planning Grant Agreement (Procurement Procedures and Other Grant Requirements). A sample contract meeting these requirements is available [here](#).

Interview Questions for Municipal Planning Project

1. Does our schedule seem reasonable?
2. Is there anything you would change about the project?
3. What does your schedule look like? Can you work on our project at the same time?
4. What is your perspective on constructed marshes and wetlands?
5. Goal of this project is to think differently about design and planning. By explicitly taking ecology as the basis of design, we can vastly diminish the environmental impacts of everything we do. Can you provide some examples of your past master planning that worked with the environment?
6. Have you had the chance to review any of our past master plans? Can you identify anything that you would do differently?
7. Have you led a community charrette before? How did it go?
8. Can you provide an example of using environmental criteria for influencing the master planning process?
9. Can you provide an example of a project your firm completed that in the end brought the community together? What was the most meaningful change that was created in the community?
10. "Vibrant Villages" and "Healthy Waitsfield" together is the Planning Commission's vision for a future downtown Irasville. This project is the third part of a three part planning process: 1) By-law modifications; 2) Wastewater design and 3) Master Planning. How would you approach this project with this understanding?
11. Do you have experience specifically with infill development?
12. What would be your approach for the master planning project with regard to the wetlands?

Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project

Update #9

To: Waitsfield Selectboard
From: Joshua Schwartz, MRV Planning District
CC: Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Team Members
Annie Decker-Dell'Isola, Waitsfield Town Admin.
JB Weir, Waitsfield Planning & Zoning Admin.
Randy Brittingham, Waitsfield Town Treasurer/Grant Admin.
Bob Cook, Waitsfield Planning Commissioner
Chach Curtis, Waitsfield Selectboard Member
Robin Morris, Waitsfield Water Commissioner
Jon Ashley, DuBois & King
Date: February 29, 2024
Re: Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Update #9

This serves as the ninth update on the Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project, a task I'm carrying out in my role as Planning Coordination Team Lead (as articulated in the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Waitsfield and the Mad River Valley Planning District for the Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project*, 3.30.23). The purpose of these updates is to ensure the Waitsfield Selectboard and Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Team Members are abreast of project status and developments, summarizing activities over the preceding weeks. Other updates in this series consist of Update #1 (4.14.23), Update #2 (5.5.23), Update #3 (5.26.23), Update #4 (7.5.23), Update #5 (8.11.23), Update #6 (9.8.23), Update #7 (12.18.23), & Update #8 (1.19.24).

Recent Activities

Project Coordination Team (PCT)

- Meetings: 1.22, 1.29, 2.5, 2.12, 2.20, & 2.26
- Activities
 - Meeting weekly to coordinate various project tasks and team activities.
 - In light of the project MOU between Waitsfield and MRVPD outlining Project Management duties ending on 3.5.24, the PCT has been focusing on the subsequent transition of responsibilities. While Joshua Schwartz will no longer be serving as PCT Lead after this date, MRVPD staff is dedicated to supporting the project through the next year. In the spring (March – June), that role will include supporting outreach and engagement efforts led by the Municipal Project Manager and the broader Waitsfield Planning Project Team. A check-in between the parties in late June will fine-tune subsequent needs and supports, for which MRVPD is committed to.
 - The PCT has developed a recommendation for hiring a Municipal Project Manager through the spring and into the summer, included as part of the 3.4 Selectboard packet.

Engineering/Technical Team (ETT)

- Meetings: 1.24, 1.31, 2.7, 2.14, 2.21, & 2.28
- Activities
 - ETT members have been undertaking property owner engagement activities over the past month and a half. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. As of 2.29, the project team has secured verbal sign-up interest from 95% of contacted parcel owners, representing 38,857 gpd, or 44%, of the project's estimated capacity. Similar conversations are underway for locations of critical easements.
 - On 1.4 Jonathan Harries, USDA RD State Engineer, provided comments on the Final Draft PER that had been sent to him on 12.6. A follow-up meeting with Jon Harries and ETT members took place on 2.7, and

after subsequent dialogue as an ETT, a draft response addressing USDA RD's comments was emailed to Jonathon Harries on 2.29.

- The project's Environmental Information Document (EID) was submitted to DEC on 1.23.
- 30% Final Design is underway. Recent ETT meetings have focused on advanced treatment technology selection process, operations considerations, tank and pump station locations, VDHP archeology requirements, and more.

Funding Team (FT)

- Meetings: 1.20 & 2.12
- Activities
 - As a result of funding eligibility for State ARPA Wastewater and USDA RD programs, the project team recommended a bond vote date of 6.11. On 1.22 the Selectboard selected this date.
 - VT Pollution Control Grant
 - Waitsfield's project is anticipated to have a favorable listing for VT Pollution Control Grant funding in the soon to be released SFY25 Intended Use Plan. Recent dialogue with DEC staff has highlighted the need to further understand potential timing for such funding.
 - State Village Wastewater ARPA Grant
 - Waitsfield's project is anticipated to have a favorable listing for State Village Wastewater ARPA funding in the soon to be released SFY25 Intended Use Plan. Recent dialogue with DEC staff has identified that the town may be eligible for more funding from this source than previously anticipated.
 - Neighborhood Development Area
 - MRVPD staff have coordinated with the Waitsfield ZA in developing a draft application for Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) Designation for Irasville, which includes extensive mapping. The draft was sent to DHCD staff for review on 2.23. Baring this feedback, the intent is to submit the NDA application in March. Amongst other benefits, an NDA designation would make Irasville eligible for CWSRF subsidy to undertake Step 2 60% Design (anticipated to commence in July 2024) as well as other funding opportunities for the construction phase.
 - USDA Rural Development
 - Project members have continued communication with Misty Sinsigalli, NH/VT Area Director.
 - An application for USDA RD funding is currently being drafted, to be submitted in advance of their 4.12 deadline.
 - Congressional Discretionary Spending
 - JB Weir has been in touch with congressional representative staff regarding CDS timelines. Applications are anticipated to be released in late March to early April.
 - Anticipating the draft version of the State's SFY25 Intended Use Plan in later March, which will provide info regarding rankings for related grant eligibility.

Public Outreach Team (POT)

- Meetings: 1.29, 2.6, 2.16, & 2.20
- Activity
 - A full project engagement strategy has been developed, which includes communication elements and an implementation timeline.
 - On 2.22 the town was notified that its application to the Small Grants for Smart Growth competitive grant round had received full funding. The program is being run by the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the Preservation Trust of Vermont to fund local initiatives for flood-resilient community development. The \$5k in funding will support the town's efforts to effectively communicate the tenets of the Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project and educate the public about the importance of municipal wastewater and how it can positively influence the public & environmental health of the community.
 - Public engagement efforts kicked off on 2.16 with the publishing of a new webpage serving as the one-stop for all info related to the Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project (WCWP).
 - <https://www.waitsfieldvt.us/waitsfield-community-wastewater-project/>
 - Consists of three sections

- Information/Summary
 - Landing page providing overview, the Why, What, & How.
- Frequently Asked Questions
 - Numerous questions related to project specifics and funding answered with detail. Additional questions to be added as they come up.
- Resources
 - All project documents, summaries, planning project updates, reports, presentations, and associated webpages.
 - Underlying challenges with the town’s website have hampered the full functionality of the WCWP webpage. The town’s new website is planned to go live in mid-March, which will include full functionality of the WCWP portions.
- A project overview document has been completed; a copy is attached. It is also available on the WCWP webpage.
 - Direct link: https://waitsfieldvt.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Copy-of-One_Pager_V7.png
- On 2.23 MRVPD staff had a meeting with a prospective videographer for the purpose of developing an education project video.
- MRVPD staff have developed a draft WCWP Story Map to be added to the WCWP webpage. A Story Map is a web-based application that will allow sharing project maps in the context of narrative text.
- MRVPD staff are creating a draft mailer highlighting project elements and announcing the 1st public meeting.
- OT members are currently working to schedule the first project public meeting, which is intended to include project partners and funders.
- Property owner engagement activities have been in action by ETT members since mid-January. Approximately 30% of property owners within the proposed service area have been contacted to date. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Near-Term Activities

- Continue Property Owner Outreach
- Revamped Town Website w/ WCWP content live
- Select 1st Public Meeting Date
- Story Map live
- USDA RD Application
- CDS Applications

HEALTHY WAITSFIELD

Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project



Project Goals

- **Protect water quality** in the Mad River
- **Safeguard human health** near drinking water wells
- **Replace aging septic systems** with no upfront cost
- **Build more housing** in Waitsfield Village & Irasville
- **Have no impact on Waitsfield municipal tax rates**



System Components

- **Wastewater collection** from homes and businesses in Waitsfield Village & Irasville
- **Conveyance** from Waitsfield Village & Irasville along VT 100 to the Munn Site
- **Treatment & disposal** at the Munn Site, across from Valley Animal Hospital

Timeline

- 2022 Planning
- 2023 Preliminary design
- 2024-25 Final design
- 2025 Permitting
- 2025 Construction starts
- 2026 System online

All work to date has been funded through state and federal sources (~\$400,000) **at no cost to taxpayers**. Initial property owner conversations are underway and have been overwhelmingly positive and supportive.

Anticipated Costs, No Tax Impact

Estimated construction costs are ~\$15 million. The Town is seeking ~\$13 million in grants and ~\$2 million in loans to pay for the system. **The project will not impact Waitsfield municipal tax rates**. Loan payments and operating costs will be covered by reasonable user fees, just like the existing town water system.



Bond Vote!

A successful bond vote on June 11, 2024 is crucial to secure maximum grant funding. Grant rules require the town vote to bond the full ~\$15M cost, even though we are seeking ~\$13M in grants. Your vote allows the town to pursue funding; construction will only proceed if grants & loans ensure affordability for users.

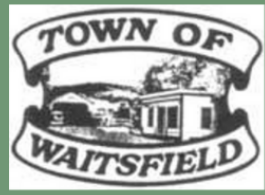


<https://www.waitsfieldvt.us/waitsfield-community-wastewater-project>

Annie Decker-Dell'Isola | wastewateradmin@gmavt.net | 802.496.2218 ext. 4

HEALTHY WAITSFIELD

Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project



Project Goals

- **Protect water quality** in the Mad River
- **Safeguard human health** near drinking water wells
- **Replace aging septic systems** with no upfront cost
- **Build more housing** in Waitsfield Village & Irasville
- **Have no impact on Waitsfield municipal tax rates**



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TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Draft

Members Present: Kevin Anderson, Beth Cook, Bob Cook, Emma Hanson, AnnMarie Harmon, Alice Peal, Jonathan Ursprung

Staff Present: JB Weir, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Others Present:

II. Regular Business.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Alice. 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 adjustments were made to the agenda.

3. Public Forum.

Nobody present requested time to address the Commission.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of February 6, 2024 were amended to more accurately reflect dates included in the RFQ, and then approved.

5. MPG RFQ

JB noted that the RFQ was published this week, and outlined the places where it has been posted. Three replies have already been received. JB also reported that he had heard from an individual associated with the bond bank that works with area grant funding, who informed JB that a potential grant from the Leahy Institute was being explored, which would potentially be a funding source for implementing the tasks that result from the MPG work. Alice noted that the State wetlands remapping project is moving to this area in 2024, and that the State's Hazard Mitigation Program is rewriting some requirements which may lead to their being more involved in local flood mitigation efforts. (FEMA mapping efforts have not yet reached the Winooski Basin, but should be addressing this area in upcoming years.)

AnnMarie reported on the steering committee formation, noting that Beth has offered to be on the committee for the candidate interview/selection process. AnnMarie has emailed Sean Lawson, Kaziah Haviland, and Brian Shupe, inviting them to join; she will also reach out to Luke Foley. Emma expressed interest in joining meetings when she is able.

Bob noted some concern regarding balancing commercial needs through the MPG work, indicating that the RFQ language skirts the issue to some degree even though Waitsfield has been the commercial center of the MRV. It was agreed to make this aspect of the MPG work more clear during the interview process, and Bob indicated that he would be interested in being peripherally involved in the recruitment phase of the RFQ.

Alice pointed out that steering committee discussions will come to the full PC for decision making, and concurred that commercial activity needs to be included in the mix during the MPG work. JB suggested that the PC spend some time discussing their vision of how the village areas will look going forward, as a way to help inform the interview process.

6. NDA Designation Application

JB indicated that Jacob Hemerick will be reviewing the application, and that he expects to receive some comments from Jacob this week. Things are still on track for review at the March meeting. JB confirmed that there is no upcoming deadline to meet for grant funding, but that a successful application will help to inform the MPG work.

Alice noted that she had met with CVRPC's Christian Meyer regarding the new regional land use plan, which will include growth center discussions. She explained that the current regional growth centers are Montpelier, Barre, and Waterbury, and noted that attributes such as availability of public transportation are part of these designations. Alice has asked about the possibility of designating 'major' and 'minor' growth centers, and has also discussed the seasonality aspect with Christian. Alice will share the associated report that is to be delivered to the legislature when the draft is ready.

7. Wastewater Planning Project Recap

JB noted that outreach to landowners and other public engagement strategies are underway. The USDA/RD application, due at the end of April, requires that the level of interest in connecting to the system be reported; so far landowner responses have all been positive. JB indicated that social media information is ready to be launched, and that a short overview, along with printed materials, will be provided at Town Meeting.

He also explained that Waitsfield's CWSRF PPL ranking will likely be improving, due to the progress made as well as the relative lack of progress in other towns whose projects are not as close to funding/construction.

Bob reported that some significant changes in location of pump stations have been outlined as the system plans become more refined; conversations with affected landowners are underway.

8. Updates from the PC Chair

CVRPC

Floodplain and Wetland remapping

LHMP and State HMP

Alice noted that she had covered most of this information during the course of the meeting. She indicated that the public hearing for the LHMP is scheduled for February 29.

Upcoming changes to the PC configuration were discussed; Alice will no longer be serving as Chair, Kevin will not be seeking reappointment, and a new representative to the MRVPD is needed.

9. Other Business

No other business was taken up by the PC.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary



TOWN OF WAITSFIELD

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD VACANCY PLANNING COMMISSION

Are you interested in helping to shape the future growth and development of Waitsfield? The Waitsfield Selectboard is seeking individuals interested in filling the seat of an expired two-year term on the Planning Commission through March 2026. Please submit a letter of interest to the Waitsfield Selectboard, 4144 Main Street, Waitsfield VT 05673 or by e-mail to townadmin@gmavt.net. For more information, contact Planning & Zoning Administrator J.B. Weir at 496-2218 or visit <https://waitsfieldvt.us/planning-commission/>. Current projects include a Master Plan for Irasville and promoting the municipal wastewater project.

J.B. Weir
Planning & Zoning Administrator

4144 Main Street, Waitsfield, VT 05673 • P: (802) 496-2218 • F: (802) 496-9284 • W: www.waitsfieldvt.us

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From: [Vermont Planners Association](#) on behalf of [Alex Weinhagen](#)
To: VPA@LIST.UVM.EDU
Subject: [VPA] VPA Legislative Summary - 2/26/24
Date: Monday, February 26, 2024 2:13:19 PM
Attachments: [image001.gif](#)
[s311_calendar_022024.pdf](#)
[s213_calendar_022324.pdf](#)

VPA Members,

The VT Legislature continues to churn on several bills with a planning nexus. VPA's Legislative Committee remains focused on housing and permit reform bills, while also tracking bills on flood hazard area permitting, accessory on-farm businesses, etc. A lot will happen in the next two weeks – the run up to “Crossover”, which is the date when bills need to be voted out of their committee of origin in order to stay alive. This year, crossover is March 15 for most bills, and March 22 for money bills.

Act 250 Reform (with a dash of municipal zoning)

Three big bills (S.308, H.687, S.311) are slated to become one in the Senate Natural Resources & Energy Committee – sometime after crossover. Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs finished work on their Be Home Bill, which was known as committee draft bill DR 24-0067, and has since become S.311. They wrapped up work, and passed it out of committee on February 16. [See attached for the latest version.](#) It was sent to Senate Natural Resources & Energy, which has been working on a different Act 250 reform bill (S.308). Rather than merge these two very different Senate bills now, the Committee plans to wait for delivery of a companion bill from the House (H.687). The House Environment & Energy Committee will continue work on H.687 this week, in the hopes of passing it out of committee prior to crossover, and having it voted on by the full House thereafter. Although eyes will be on H.687 in the House for the next week or two, it appears the real “sausage making” will be later on the Senate side, when Senate Natural Resources & Energy will try to merge and blend the three bills into one.

All three of these bills envision Act 250 jurisdictional changes based on location – e.g., exemptions and higher thresholds in planned growth areas (Tier 1A, Tier 1B areas); increased jurisdiction throughout most of the state (Tier 2 areas); automatic jurisdiction in highly sensitive resource areas (Tier 3 areas). These changes would be phased in over a couple years, with collaboration between regional planning commissions and municipalities on the mapping of the different Tier areas. All three envision a return of a “road rule” Act 250 trigger, in which projects with more than a certain linear distance of roads and driveways would require an Act 250 permit – regardless of how many lots or dwelling units are proposed.

S.311 includes much more robust Act 250 exemptions for residential development – both in the immediate term, and as part of the future Tier-based jurisdictional system. The full scope of these exemptions is complicated, difficult to summarize, and will likely be revised dramatically by the Senate Natural Resources & Energy Committee. S.311 also includes a dash of municipal zoning reform/pre-emption. These are easier to detail, and include:

- [Duplexes](#) – Builds on last year's HOME Act (Act 47, S.100), to require that duplexes be a permitted use and be treated the same as single unit dwellings with regard to land area (i.e.,

density).

- Multi-unit Dwellings – Expands on last year’s HOME Act provision regarding areas served by municipal sewer and water, to require that 3 and 4 unit dwellings be permitted on lots of at least 1/3 acre and with an allowed density of at least 12 units per acre. Also clarifies that both density and minimum lot size standards for multi-unit dwellings cannot be more restrictive than those required for single unit dwellings. *Unclear if this means the minimum lot size requirement for a 4-plex must be the same as a single-unit dwelling lot, or if it can be required to be bigger on a per unit basis.*
- Density & Lot Size – Expands on last year’s HOME Act minimum five dwelling units per acre density within municipal sewer and water areas. The new provision would require that any lot smaller than one acre by no more than 10% be treated as one acre for residential density purposes, if granted a variance. *Yep, that’s a weird one given how difficult it is to grant variances.*
- Unrelated Occupants – Prohibits zoning and subdivision bylaws from having the effect of prohibiting unrelated occupants from residing in the same dwelling.
- Hotel & Motel Conversion – Puts conversion of hotels and motels to permanently affordable housing in the protected class of uses – i.e., those that can only be subject to limited review akin to site plan review. Similar to State facilities, churches, schools, etc.
- Parking Bylaws – Expressly allows for certain types of parking and sets a standard parking space size:
 - Tandem Parking Allowed – Tandem (i.e., stacked) parking spaces shall count toward residential parking requirements; however, a municipality may require that tandem spaces are not shared between different dwelling units.
 - Parking Space Size – Defines dimensions of a standard parking space as 9’x18’, but allows municipalities to allow smaller spaces for compact cars, and larger spaces for ADA compliance as required.
 - Existing Non-conforming Parking – Requires that municipalities allow existing nonconforming parking spaces to count toward parking requirements when new dwelling units are added to an existing building.
- Lot Coverage – Requires that municipalities allow for a maximum lot coverage bonus of 10% on lots that allow access to new or subdivided lots without road frontage. *Still wondering what stakeholder or specific problem project prompted this provision.*
- Decision Clock – Requires that appropriate municipal panels (e.g., DRB, PC, ZBA) issue decisions on a development application within 180 days of receipt of a complete application, unless the applicant and the panel agree to waive the deadline. *Needs refinement, as this change could result in slower decisions compared to the current requirement of issuing a decision within 45 days of closing a hearing.*

- Appeals Interested Person/Group Number – The ability of immediate abutters, the applicant, and others outlined in statute would remain. However, the bill does change the existing provision that allows any 10 residents or property owners to appeal a municipal development review decision. Instead, this would be increased to three percent of the municipality’s population or any 25 persons. *Wording seems unclear as to whether it is really three percent of the population (potentially a very large number in some communities) or just 25 persons.*
- Appeal Exclusions – Prohibits appeals of municipal decisions regarding residential and mixed-use development with up to 25 dwelling units in areas served by municipal sewer and water. Prohibits appeals regarding any permitted residential and mixed-use development that doesn’t require conditional use review. Prohibits appeals regarding any housing or mixed-use development within a designated center in a zoning district that allows residential development.

Want to see the actual bill language?

- S.311 – see attached
- S.308 – see [online](#), Senate Natural Resources & Energy bills webpage
- H.687 – see [online](#), House Environment & Energy bills webpage

For those interested and/or engaged:

- Pay attention to the Senate Natural Resources & Energy Committee [weekly agenda](#) in the coming weeks.
- Be ready to draft and submit feedback to the full committee and its assistant (just six people). Contact information on the committee [webpage](#).
- If interested in testifying (most impactful way to provide feedback), contact the Committee Chairperson (Senator Chris Bray, cbray@leg.state.vt.us) and copy the committee assistant (Jude Newman, jnewman@leg.state.vt.us) to request an opportunity to testify when the committee begins work on merging these three bills.

S.213 – State regulation of flood hazard areas, wetlands, river corridors and dam safety

See my 2/6/24 legislative summary for a description of this bill – can be found on the [VPA website](#). It passed out of the Senate Natural Resources & Energy Committee on February 23 with substantial revisions. See attached for the latest version. Perhaps the most significant revision is that the bill no longer contemplates the State taking over permitting and administration of flood hazard area development from municipalities. Instead, it requires the State to have a flood hazard permitting system for development exempt from municipal flood hazard permitting. More importantly, it directs the State to develop minimum flood hazard area development standards by 2026 for enrollment in the National Flood Insurance Program, and to require that all municipal flood hazard regulations meet or exceed these minimum standards by 2028.

Well, actually... the bill does still include a separate State permit system for development in a river corridor area. So, presumably any development in both a river corridor and a flood hazard area will require both State and municipal permits. The bill also still includes stronger “net-gain” wetland regulation changes and dam safety provisions.

The bill does contain some funding provisions, so it will visit the Appropriations Committee before it

heads to the full Senate for a vote. At this point, recommendations for substantive changes will need to be made on the House side (i.e., House Environment & Energy Committee), if and when the Senate approves the bill. As reported in a [February 23 VT Digger article](#), the Governor is opposed to the bill, and has threatened to veto it – in part because the State Agency of Natural Resources doesn't have the resources to administer the new programs and because the bill doesn't include enough new funding/resources for ANR to do so.

Alex Weinhagen
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President & Legislative Committee Member
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Advancing the art and science of planning in Vermont