

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 17, 2023

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: JB Weir, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Others Present: Alex Belenz (SE Group), Sam Robinson (MRVPD)

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 changes were made to the agenda. Alice noted she may postpone discussion of the Winooski Basin Tactical Plan until the next meeting.

3. Public Forum.

Nobody requested an opportunity to address the PC.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of October 3, 2023 were amended and approved.

5. MRVPD Data Presentation

Sam Robinson provided a presentation of the recently published Annual MRVPD Data Report, and answered questions from PC members.

6. Draft Zoning Bylaws

Review changes by SE Group – Alex Belenz provided information regarding changes made based upon feedback provided by Kevin, who had summarized the comments received from the Selectboard, DRB, and PC.

- Flag lot dimensional standards are now included, with 25 feet of road frontage required, and an exemption from any front yard requirement in place.
 - This change will not be applicable to other districts, as they have larger minimum lot sizes
- Cottage court language has been revised
 - Definitions now include one for cottage and one for cottage development
 - The cottage development definition refers to a single lot, which indicates that if more than one lot is part of the project, it will be reviewed as a PUD
 - It is up to the developer to know whether Act 250 review is necessary
 - The cottage definition was edited during the meeting, clarifying that both detached and connected units are allowed
 - All cottage development was moved to Conditional permitting, eliminating the permitted approval of 4 or fewer units
 - Language was added to lot and yard requirements for cottage development

- Cross references for cottage development and cottage court will be checked to ensure consistency
- The building coverage definition was updated and renamed to remove confusion between ‘footprint’ and ‘coverage’
- The area median income in the affordable housing definition was clarified
- Setback waivers – JB confirmed that waivers for setbacks may be requested through the Conditional Use process, and the practice has been that this is allowed for new residences/buildings, not just accessory structures. It was agreed to adjust the bylaws to reflect this practice, and to add language regarding requesting a waiver of the maximum setback standard now that one has been established.
- Feedback from the Selectboard included some concern that certain uses are proposed to be included in the ‘permitted’ category, when one of the major goals of this work is to promote housing in the village areas. Alice spoke of the history and the desire of residents to keep the Village Residential area residential in nature. It was agreed to revert these uses back to the Conditional Use category: Artist studio/gallery, personal services, and home business.

The possibility of changing the zoning map to incorporate the three properties at the northern end of the Village Residential District into that District was discussed. JB explained that a zoning map change is treated the same way as any other zoning bylaw change, and so could be incorporated into this update. It was generally agreed that this change should be made, but there were pros and cons presented for either doing it with the current revision or holding off until the next revision is underway. One point discussed was whether to notify the three property owners in advance of making the change and holding a public hearing on the Bylaws; it was agreed that since this topic has been part of the conversation through the process, and because not everybody who may be affected by other changes has been individually notified, that singling out this change for separate notification is not suitable.

MOTION: *Kevin made a motion to amend the Zoning Map to include the three parcels discussed into the Village Residential District. The motion passed, with Bob and Alice voting against.*

Alex will provide an updated document to the Commission members for review.

7. Municipal Planning Grant (MPG)

Meeting with Fayston PC/SB – The Fayston PC advised the Waitsfield PC to present a memo to the Fayston Selectboard regarding Fayston’s participation in the MPG application.

AnnMarie presented options for the scope of work to be undertaken through the MPG, and there was a discussion regarding whether to proceed with more typical visioning/planning for Irasville, taking into account the constraints of the existing wetlands, or to begin with an effort to learn where the capacity of existing wetlands might be increased and thus potentially allowing for development in a greater portion of that district. Points made during the discussion included:

- The Winooski Tactical Basin Plan is being updated, and wetlands will be looked at closely for this report.
- Wetlands are important to flood mitigation and wildlife habitat; Irasville’s wetlands play a role in mitigating flooding in Waitsfield Village and other downstream areas.
- It would be beneficial to plan for Irasville in conjunction with continued wastewater planning.

- Arrowwood Environmental, who completed similar wetland study work in the area previously, has been consulted and feels that addressing wetland enhancement is feasible.
- Landowner engagement will be critical to the success of the project.
- This will be a multi-year effort.
- Deliverables need to be determined and outlined in the grant application.
- It's possible that a second round of MPG funding would provide additional resources for further visioning work once the wetland focus is completed.
- Some master planning for portions of Irasville might take place in tandem with the wetland focus work.

MOTION: *A motion to proceed with the completion and submission of a Municipal Planning Grant application, with the project description to outline municipal planning and visioning for Irasville, with the focus to be on an analysis of the potential enhancement of wetland functioning in the District, passed with Alice voting against and all others in favor.*

8. Other Business

Winooski Basin Tactical Plan – Alice will provide a link to this and also to other presentations regarding Act 67 and other housing information.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary