

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Planning Services to Modernize Zoning and Subdivision Bylaws in Waitsfield, Vermont

Date Issued: Friday, July 1, 2022

Responses Due: 12 Noon Friday August 5, 2022

Overview

The Town of Waitsfield (“Town”) seeks a qualified consultant(s) to assist its Planning Commission and Planning and Zoning Administrator in drafting amendments to the Town’s zoning and subdivision regulations to promote housing and walkable development in and adjacent to the Town’s villages. The objective of this project is to identify and remove unnecessary or outdated regulations that restrict such development and propose new, context-sensitive regulations that better enable the Town to meet local housing needs and sustain vibrant village centers. The project will build on a feasibility study of wastewater and water supply services currently underway and draw from a recently completed village wetlands evaluation and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development’s *Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods* (2020).

Context and Background

Waitsfield is in the midst of a severe housing shortage. Rising home prices and rental costs are changing the demographics of the community, driving residents and workers to live elsewhere. Growth in the number of short term rentals is perceived by many as having a negative impact on housing affordability. The Town’s existing centers – the Village of Waitsfield (a state-designated Village Center) and Irasville – are where the Town desires to concentrate development but have limits to their developability due to a lack of wastewater infrastructure and the presence of environmental constraints. These trends and features are well documented in the [Waitsfield Town Plan](#) (2017), [Mad River Valley Housing Demand and Market Analysis](#) (2020), and the [Irasville and Waitsfield Village Wetland Analysis](#) (2021).

Yet Irasville, Waitsfield Village, and the lands adjacent to both, coupled with prevailing sentiment regarding housing, offer great potential for more housing and walkable neighborhood-scale development. Irasville and Waitsfield Village are vibrant and remain the commercial hub of the Mad River Valley. Public recognition and demand for housing solutions in Waitsfield is at an all-time high. A high quality, underutilized public water system serves Irasville and Waitsfield Village. A DEC-funded study of the feasibility of developing public or community wastewater systems, and extending the public water system, is underway and may benefit from unprecedented federal investments in infrastructure. In-process amendments to the Waitsfield Town Plan will put an even greater emphasis on meeting housing needs by modernizing bylaws.

The time is ripe for the Town, working with consultants skilled in community design and code reform, to dive deep into Waitsfield’s bylaws to find unnecessary barriers to housing

development and put simple, predictable, context-sensitive regulations in place that promote village and neighborhood development. Public input is essential to this effort, and the consultants selected must be as adept with code writing as they are with code illustrating and public engagement. All options are on the table, from zoning district boundary changes to the modifications of the development review process.

Work Plan & Time Frame

The planning consultant(s), along with members of the Planning Commission and the Planning & Zoning Administrator, will collectively work to characterize existing and desired settlement patterns, identify regulatory barriers to achieve desired land use outcomes, and draft and propose for adoption new zoning and subdivision bylaw amendments to facilitate walkable mixed use and mixed housing type development in and adjacent to Waitsfield Village and Irasville. Importantly, this team will collaborate and consider the work of the team studying the development and expansion of wastewater and water supply facilities in the Town to inform options to increase density and analyze build-out.

A series of community forums will be held to discuss housing needs, current trends, community character, historic settlement patterns, and the town’s current zoning and subdivision regulations. The goal of these forums will not only focus on identifying local housing needs and regulatory barriers but other factors and considerations that also may be impacting housing availability and affordability. Participation will be sought from property owners, renters, business owners, those who want to live in Waitsfield, landlords, Development Review Board members, *etc.* with the intent of having an inclusive community conversation, including with those that might not commonly participate.

Working with the Planning Commission and the Planning & Zoning Administrator, the planning consultant(s) will gather public input and evaluate the town’s current zoning and subdivision regulations. Evaluation of the town’s regulations will include, at minimum, review of current dimensional requirements and density standards, accessory dwelling unit (ADU) provisions, affordable housing density bonuses, parking requirements, nonconformities, evaluation of the town’s designated village center boundaries, possible designation as a Neighborhood Development Area, and recommendations on regulating short-term rentals. The consultant will identify the enabling statute authorizing any of the recommendations, other Vermont municipalities, if any, in which similar recommendations have been implemented, as well as the anticipated staff resource needs and cost of administering the recommendations. While the final work plan and budget will be negotiated with the consultant, the total project costs cannot exceed \$27,500. The consultant will collaborate with the Planning Commission and the Planning & Zoning Administrator to identify what can be tackled in the short term and develop a list of future recommendations for zoning and subdivision improvements that can be worked on at a later date.

*Particular consideration will be given to those consultants who can meet an accelerated time frame.

Proposals should address the following tasks and provide possible dates and deliverables. Below is a suggested timeline but proposals may deviate from it provided that all project deliverables are submitted by August 1, 2023.

| Task Name | Task Description | Time Frame |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| Introduction | Staff familiarizes consultant with current regulations, bylaw revision progress, community expectations, in person site visit (staff-led preferred, or self-guided) | September 2022 |
| Groundwork Kick-Off Meeting | Consultant meets with PC/PZA to review scope of work, public outreach, consultant work products, develop anticipated meeting schedule and topics. | October 2022 |
| Review Existing Plans & Regulations | Consultant reviews existing planning documents including Town Plan, zoning and subdivision bylaws, village wetlands study, <i>MRV Moves</i> , and wastewater and water supply feasibility study; Consultant Identifies amendments that should be considered. | October - November 2022 |
| Public Input Preparation | With input from PC/PZA, identify public outreach activities that will occur throughout the process in order to solicit input and guidance from the community and develop marketing materials. | October - November 2022 |
| Existing Community Character & Settlement Pattern Assessment | Consultant and steering committee tour the study area. Consultant to assess existing character and settlement pattern of each area and complete a written report with graphics summarizing findings. | December 2022 |
| Public Education and Outreach | Steering committee hosts in-person distanced and virtual meetings and opportunities for public input; Consultant & steering committee with support from PZA to lead public outreach events. | December 2022 - March 2023 |
| Prepare Draft Amendments | Consultant prepares draft revisions to zoning and subdivision regulations that incorporate input from public outreach activities and steering committee and wastewater and water supply feasibility study. | November & December 2022 |
| Present Draft Amendments | Consultant to present draft amendments to the steering committee. PZA to assist the consultant and steering committee in developing recommended amendments. | February 2023 |
| Progress Report | Town staff to submit progress report with second requisition to ACCD. | April 1, 2023 |
| Public Forum to Present Recommended Amendments | Consultant and steering committee to hold a public forum where recommended amendments are summarized, and public input gathered before moving toward the adoption process. | April/May 2023 |
| Finalize Revision Package/Prepare Draft Documents for Adoption | Consultant prepares draft documents for adoption. This includes hearing notices and bylaw report required by 24 VSA 4441. | Early Summer 2023 |
| Legal Review | Consultant and PZA participate in legal review of proposed bylaw amendments to assure they are in conformance with applicable state and federal laws. | Summer 2023 |

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| Adoption Process- Planning Commission Public Hearing(s) | PZA warns Planning Commission public hearing(s). | Summer/Fall 2023 |
| Adoption Process- Selectboard Public Hearings | Municipal staff prepare and warn Selectboard public hearing(s). | TBD |
| Bylaw Copies | Material Production of Updated Documents (Zoning & Subdivision Regulations) [municipal staff] | TBD |
| Grant Close Out | Project complete; all funds spent. | January 31, 2024 |

Deliverables

The project deliverables include an existing character and settlement pattern assessment/report, hearing drafts of proposed zoning and subdivision amendments, and hearing notices and bylaw reports required by 24 VSA §4441. Ultimately, the Planning Commission and Selectboard are the decision makers who will need to hold a formal hearing process and adopt the bylaw amendments. A PDF with Microsoft Word original file is an acceptable final format. All “final” files that are created during this project shall be shared with the Town of Waitsfield at the completion of the project.

Funding

There is \$27,500 available for this project from a Vermont Bylaw Modernization Grant administered by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. All work covered by this funding must be completed by January 31, 2024. The project is expected to start in September and run through the fall of 2023 leaving sufficient time for the public hearing process. The public hearing process will be led by municipal staff and the Planning Commission.

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**– Provide a statement of your qualifications as a consultant to carry out the project and resumes of all the key individuals that will be involved in the project.
3. **Summaries of Relevant Projects** –Describe relevant experience on similar projects and list the work experience of the individuals expected to be involved in the project.
4. **References**– Include a minimum of three (3) professional references for whom a similar project has been completed within the past ten (10) years.
5. **Cost Proposal**– A cost proposal with hourly rates and total hours for all individuals/consultants involved and a not-to-exceed total for the entire project.

All information submitted shall become property of the Town of Waitsfield upon submission. The municipality 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 must submit one (1) digital copy (PDF) by 12 Noon Friday August 5, 2022 to:

*Town of Waitsfield
JB Weir, Planning & Zoning Administrator
(802) 496 - 2218
pza@gmavt.net*

Please expect a confirmation email upon receipt of your submission. If you have any questions about this project or the RFQ, please address them in writing by email to *pza@gmavt.net*. We will respond to all questions in writing within 1-3 business days.

RFQ Schedule Summary

RFQ Released July 1, 2022

Qualifications due no later than 12 Noon Friday August 5, 2022

Consultants selected for short-list by August 12, 2022

Interviews week of August 15th, 2022

Consultant selection by August 23rd, 2022

Finalize contract early September, 2022

Deliverables due no later than August 1, 2023

Complete project by January 31, 2024

Selection Process / 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%
 - a) Experience doing similar work in other communities.
 - b) Knowledge of Vermont land use and zoning statutes, historic preservation, and principles of neighborhood design.
 - c) Understanding of the unique balance between preserving historic and community character while allowing flexibility for adaptive reuse, infill development, and the need for housing opportunity.
 - d) Proven ability to conduct public meetings, work collaboratively with municipal staff, and effectively communicate with volunteer committees and both in-person and a virtual setting.
 - e) Availability to begin work on project in September/October 2022.
2. Quality, completeness and clarity of submission – 15%

Qualifications will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of the Planning Commission and the Planning & Zoning Administrator. The Town of Waitsfield reserves the right to select the top two to three 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 qualifications. 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 selection committee and allow the selection committee to ask targeted questions of the consultant. The interview and presentation, if deemed necessary by the selection committee, will be held at the Town Office in Waitsfield, Vermont, or scheduled on Zoom as needed. 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 consultant 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, subject to the approval of the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the project grantor. 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 standard requirements of the Municipal Planning Grant Program (Procurement Procedures and Other Grant Requirements).

Reservation of Rights: Through its Town Administrator, the Town of Waitsfield reserves the right to reject any proposals, in part or whole, to waive any irregularities or informalities therein, or to negotiate with any qualified source if doing so is in the best interest of the Town.