

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 15, 2023

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

Members Absent:

Staff Present: JB Weir, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Others Present: Alex Belenz (SE Group), Julia Randell (SE Group)

II. Regular Business.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order 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.

The order of items was changed.

3. Public Forum.

Nobody requested an opportunity to address the PC.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of August 1, 2023 were approved.

5. Other Business

Alice reported on the following:

- She attended the Selectboard meeting on August 14
 - Provided the Board with an update on the bylaw revision process
 - Beth has been appointed to the PC
 - Discussed with the Board the adoption timeline for the Land Use Regulations
 - Reported about potential upcoming grant opportunities
 - Discussed Town Plan adoption and revisions to Chapter 13
 - It was agreed to have updates completed by September 11 and a Public Hearing on September 25
 - The Board would still like to see a summary page of goals
 - Any suggestions for Chapter 13 changes should be sent to JB asap
- She has reached out to the DRB regarding bylaw change review
- Learned that the Municipal Planning Grant application must be associated with a specific project, and is looking into this
- The Town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is expired, and should be re-adopted in order to be eligible for beneficial flood insurance rates and coverage

6. Group Bylaws/Vibrant Villages Bylaws

Alex Belenz and Julia Randall outlined the proposed changes to the Irasville section of the Bylaws, noting and discussing the following:

- Building footprint limits for mixed use and multi-family increased
 - In order to have existing structures be conforming
- Questions regarding maximum footprint for retail, including grocery
 - Potential for separation of permitted and conditional based on size
 - Potential to establish a maximum and carve out exceptions
- Limits on office space footprint
 - Unclear if office space maximum will actually lead to an increase in housing
 - Agreed after discussion that:
 - changes should be made to multi-family and mixed use as proposed
 - office and retail to have no maximum for this iteration, and this will be revisited at future date
- Gallery moved to permitted use column
- Dimensional standards
 - To be in line with the Village districts; change to bring existing structures into conformance
 - Minimum and maximum setback noted as the same, so maximum changed to 45 feet
- Addition of requirement for sidewalk/pedestrian connection along driveway for cottage courts; this will be added to other districts as well

Jonathan raised the issue of Slow Road considerations, particularly related to rear parking requirements. It was agreed that that standard could be changed to side building for this area. Road-facing façade requirements (including the selection of primary-facing façade and primary building access) are also difficult here, and Alex pointed out that this would best be addressed in Master Plan discussions. He noted that the currently proposed language requires new development to face both Route 100 and the Slow Road, which is cumbersome, but an adequate placeholder. Julia pointed out that the related Master Plan discussion on this topic should include more than the Slow Road area.

Kevin had provided comments related to front yard requirements; it was agreed that the requirement should exclude driveways and access roads.

Kevin had also questioned whether a definition is needed for 'proximate,' which is used in the Parking and Loading language which encourages shared parking. Alex pointed out that the applicant's self-interest should help determine what 'proximate' is in specific situations. It was agreed to retain the phrase 'proximate or contiguous.'

Alex also pointed out, in response to questions regarding ensuring connecting sidewalks and crosswalks, that the DRB has the latitude during Conditional Use hearings to impose relevant conditions. He also noted that a pedestrian policy, separate from the Land Use Regulations, would be a beneficial addition for Waitsfield. It was agreed, however, to remove the language requiring legal counsel review from the shared parking language.

It was also agreed to have the minimum parking spaces per dwelling unit to be one, as this is what is included in the newly passed HOME Act for towns with wastewater disposal facilities.

There was discussion regarding the mandating of utilization of renewable energy resource where practicable; it was agreed that 'where practicable' allows for mandating rather than encouraging. However, further discussion brought forth the topic of thermal installations, and the distinction between those and resources for renewable electricity. The distinction included in the draft between ensuring no interference with potential renewable infrastructure and mandating utilization of the same was also raised. It was agreed that these topics require further discussion.

Alex noted that cottage court dwelling now has a more detailed definition included, and explained that the current draft has been updated so that a PUD is not necessary for all cottage court developments.

Alice explained that a draft should be available to the Selectboard and DRB by the end of September, and requested that any further comments be provided to JB asap. JB explained that he will be reviewing the entire draft document to make sure all cross references are in alignment with the proposed changes. He will have the full draft ready for PC review at their September 5 meeting.

The logistics of the adoption process and timeline were outlined.

7. Wastewater Project Update

JB noted that an update from Joshua Schwartz was included in the meeting packet, and that the committee is still waiting for several responses from DEC. He indicated that the salary survey work will likely commence in October.

8. Other Business

It was confirmed that the Town was not selected for the Home Toolkit recently applied for.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary