

**TOWN OF WATERFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING DATED JANUARY 20, 2016
MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Dimick, Howard Remick, Bob DuMaire,
Dave Senio, John Gillott, Tom Robinson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mike Barrett

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Christopher Brimmer, Irene Nagle, Linda
Mitchell, and Secretary, Michelle Collins

Bill brought the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

1. Minutes

Bill reviewed minutes of last months meeting.

Howard moved to accept the minutes of the December 16, 2015 meeting.

Dave seconded the motion.

Bill called for a vote, and all present approved the motion.

2. Modification of Agenda

Bill modified the agenda to remove "Survey: Citizens' Comments" from "Old Business."

3. Citizens' Concerns

Linda Mitchell, a resident in Lower Waterford, expressed her interest in the historic preservation of the town, as she owns a historic home, and supports the idea of historic conservation.

4. Old Business

There were no concerns or comments at this time.

5. New Business: Draft of Town Plan

Irene Nagle, Senior Planner at NVDA, distributed a copy of the drafted Town Plan to the board and presented the Goals and Action Steps for each section, noting each as regulatory or non-regulatory. The sections reviewed include: Housing, Community Facilities and Services, Education, Transportation, Energy, Economic Development, Flood Resilience, and Land Use.

The Goals and Action Steps currently listed in the *draft* of the Town Plan for each section are as follows:

HOUSING

1. Preserve Waterford's stock of older houses and encourage their continued use to provide a range of housing choices.

- Provide incentives for the conversion and rehabilitation of vacant houses to needed rental housing units.

- Review dimensional requirements in the Village District and revise as necessary to allow for appropriate improvements and additions to existing properties.
2. Maintain an adequate standard of housing for all its residents.
 - Ensure that state building code for rental properties and relevant local land use regulations are enforced.
 3. Maintain an overall low residential density in order to retain Waterford's rural character.
 - Revise local zoning to create additional classes of districts that maintain a residential density lower than the currently permitted 1 unit per two acres. Use data on existing land use, land cover, soils, and significant natural or scenic features (as depicted on the maps accompanying this plan) to guide the boundaries of new districts.
 4. Provide options for affordable housing that is in keeping with the character of Waterford's rural setting, and which retains the pristine water quality, scenic and historic areas, and natural resources.
 - Provide for density-based zoning or planned unit development regulations that permit smaller house lots while preserving significant blocks of rural land and maintaining a low overall residential density.
 5. Large housing developments (five lots or more) should be located in close proximity to existing community centers, should be self-contained in regard to new road construction and maintenance, and should provide for services, facilities, and open space as needed.
 - Ensure that local land use regulations provide adequate standards to achieve these objectives.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AN SERVICES

1. Achieve broadband coverage throughout the Town
 - The Town of Waterford will work with the Connectivity Division at the Vermont Department of Public Service to provide information on areas in Town underserved by broadband and to help identify solutions that will best resolve connectivity problems
2. Future development should take into consideration the proximity of the existing public water supply main and the Source Protection Plan for the St. Johnsbury water supply.
 - Coordinate land use decisions within the Stiles Pond Source Protection Area with the Town of St. Johnsbury.
 - Investigate possibility of tapping into public water main to support appropriate development in Waterford.
3. Any major developments in Town should be required to develop their own disposal systems in accordance with State permitting requirements, and which will require no commitment from the Town.
 - Ensure that local land use regulations articulate requirements for development of community systems if needed.

4. Manage solid waste in a way that protects the environment and is in keeping with State recycling laws

- The Town of Waterford should remain a member of the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District, as long as it remains economical and effective.

EDUCATION

There are currently no Goals or Action Steps listed, and Irene recommended communicating with the Waterford School Board to get these established.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Maintain the scenic character and/or scenic views from the roads identified above.
 - The Selectboard and the State of Vermont District Highway Engineer should consult with the Planning Commission regarding its recommendations concerning any plans for any reconstruction or major maintenance affecting these designated scenic roads.
 - Upgrading of the town roads, especially scenic roads, should conform to the basic standards of the booklet “Vermont Backroad,” prepared by Northeastern Environmental Design, of which the town has a copy on file. No right-of-way should be permitted for any new road less than fifty feet in width.
2. Provide for safe and convenient alternative transportation options to the private automobile.
 - In addition to Route 18 where it approaches Lower Waterford Village, identify specific areas where road or trails could be improved to increase safety by bicyclists and pedestrians.
3. Do not increase the miles of Town road that needs maintenance.
 - Ensure that subdivision regulations provide for a mechanism by which any new subdivision roads created are maintained in perpetuity by a homeowners association or other mechanism, to ensure that maintenance responsibility does not fall on the Town.
4. Identify road projects that will need to be completed in accordance with the upcoming MRGP and seek sources of funding.
 - Seek assistance from NVDA transportation planning staff.
5. Ensure that new road and driveway construction does not negatively impact waterways.
 - The layout of the new subdivision roads and driveways in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.

ENERGY

1. Support the use of renewable energy in Town, while preserving scenic and agricultural resources.
 - Investigate the establishment of a local PACE program as a way to encourage the installation of residential-scale renewable energy.
 - Develop local regulations that establish screening requirements, as provided by Act 56, to be applied to ground-mounted solar plants, as one means of protecting scenic views.
 - Use renewable energy systems for any newly constructed Town buildings.
2. Conserve forested lands in Town as a valuable renewable fuel source.

- Provide education to property owners about the tax benefits of enrollment of forested land in the Current Use program, and the importance of forest management plans to ensure the continued existence of wood as a local fuel source.
- Develop standards for density-based zoning regulations that require preservation of important blocks of forested lands while allowing smaller lot sizes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Retain and promote agriculture and forest-based industry as the prime economic base within the town.
 - Provide assistance to residents seeking to establish on-farm enterprises, through the use of land use regulations on incentives.
 - Provide support to farmers interested in diversification and/or product development. Provide information on grants and low-interest loans for value-adding businesses and diversification.
 - Form a local agricultural committee to serve as an information clearinghouse and provide marketing support for local farm-based and forest-based businesses.
 - Better define the definitions of home occupation to accommodate the type of farm-based businesses the community would like to see.
2. Achieve Town-wide broadband coverage to support local farm and forest-based businesses.
 - Contact the Connectivity Division at the Vermont Department of Public Service to provide information on areas in Town underserved by broadband and to help identify solutions that will best resolve connectivity problems.
3. Maintain enough forest land to support wood-related industries, retain the town's natural beauty, promote recreational usage, and maintain a healthy, sustainable forest based economy.
 - Encourage the use of "planned unit development" coupled with low density zoning and other tools to preserve agricultural and forest resources.
 - Educate landowners to enroll productive forestland and agricultural land in the "current use" program.

FLOOD RESILIENCE

1. Mitigate flood hazards and maintain good water quality by undertaking restoration projects, reducing storm water runoff from new development, and assuring long-term protection of the River Corridor from incompatible development and uses.
 - Create a capital improvement plan to address the projects identified for Waterford in the LHMP, beginning with the highest priority projects.
 - Amend the Flood Hazard regulations to regulate development within the River Corridor areas mapped by DEC, in order to mitigate flood hazard risks and protect investments made in restoration projects, and receive a higher amount of funding under ERAF.
 - Consider establishing impervious coverage limitations as part of the town's zoning district standards to limit storm water runoff that can contribute to flooding and degrade water quality.
 - Include Planned Unit Development provisions in the Town's zoning bylaws to better enable developments that have reduced clearing and impervious coverage, and enable flexibility in siting developments outside of floodplains and river corridors.

- Hold a flood hazard area education event to inform local residents.

LAND USE

1. Maintain the concentrated nature of the Lower Waterford Village and encourage the rehabilitation of older buildings in this area for village-scale commercial uses.
 - Seek Village Center designation by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
2. Maintain Waterford's rural setting, productive agricultural and forested lands.
 - Identify areas where residential density should be lowered, and create density-based zoning districts that maintain low overall density while permitting smaller lot sized to increase energy efficient development and to protect important natural resources.

The Members discussed the fifth goal under the *Housing* section, and it was noted that potential areas for housing developments should be defined in the town plan. The part of Waterford closest to East St. Johnsbury was discussed to be considered as a defined housing development area, and that current road systems be utilized in attempt to not create more roads. It was agreed that the idea of HOA's would be discussed and to establish revisions in this section for the next meeting.

While discussing the *Community Facilities and Services* section, the board viewed a map of the approximate location of the zoning district. It was discussed to continue to preserve areas around water supplies, such as Stiles Pond, and it was noted that this concept is related to the Source Protection Plan, which means contact with St. Johnsbury will need to take place. It was also discussed that a section regarding compact ability with surrounding towns be added to the Town Plan. The board agreed to conceptualize having a bond set in place to ensure accurate regulations are set with private systems, such as HOAs.

While reviewing and discussing the *Transportation* section in the draft, it was noted that the town has the ability to avoid specific areas of scenic value (pertaining to Goal 1), and it was also discussed that there are potential changes to zoning regulations affecting goal 5.

Howard expressed concern pertaining to the *Energy* section of the draft, saying that if solar projects are being constructed, they should be used and not sit idol. The board recommended that solar projects should hold requirements to diminish and restore the land to its original use. It was noted to add "industrial" to one of the Action Steps (bullet 2), and it was also discussed that a Forest Management Plan be implemented by the DRB. Controversy of having an allotted area for town residents to cut wood was expressed, but it was agreed to be a possibility after gaining more research and knowledge on the subject.

The Members discussed the idea of implementing a Conservation Committee pertaining to the *Economic Development* section of the draft. Tom expressed his opinion that the plan should consider a broader range other than just forest and agriculture.

While discussing the *Flood Resilience* section, it was noted that specific things need to be established and in place in order to receive more funding. The River Corridor Map was viewed, and it was recommended that there would be no development in river corridors as well as a fifty-foot setback of all other streams, etc.

It was agreed to discuss the *Land Use* section during the next meeting.

6. Other

Linda Mitchell expressed concern about Lower Waterford being a commercial area in the Town Plan, and wanted to ensure that the plan also covered aspects on wildlife.

The agenda was set for the February 17th meeting: Minutes; Modification of Agenda; Citizens' Concerns; Old Business: Additional Goals and Action Steps to Land Use; New Business: Finalize Draft of Town Plan; Other

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 P.M. by Howard.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved:

Michelle Collins, Secretary