

Hardwick Planning Commission  
March 21, 2023  
(\*Rescheduled from March 14, 2023  
due to the lack of internet & power  
during a snow storm)  
Zoom Meeting  
Minutes

HPC Members Present: Joyce Mandeville; Ken Davis; Shari Cornish; Jim Lewis and Dave Gross, Chair

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator and Tracy Martin, Community Development Coordinator.

Absent: Michael Haveson

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:35 pm. Ken Davis moved to approve the agenda as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. Ken Davis moved to approve the February 7, 2023 meeting minutes as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor.

**Updates from the Community Development Coordinator:**

*Bylaw Modernization Grant*

The Bylaw Modernization Grant was received by the Town of Hardwick and will allow the HPC to hire a planner to facilitate the examination of the town's current zoning bylaw. In particular, the planner will focus on housing issues. Only one proposal was received from the RFP request - Heather Carrington from CCDS, LLC. Heather was the consultant who facilitated Hardwick's Downtown Designation process. Tracy Martin highly recommended Heather's work and her ability to meet grant funding mandates.

The Select Board approved the request to offer the contract to CCDS, LLC. The contract was created and forwarded to Heather Carrington. The Planning Commission will be able to begin work with Heather at the April 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

*Pedestrian Bridge Project (Multiple Grants Involved)*

Currently, the pedestrian bridge project is slated to receive funds from USDA (\$200,000). The initial grant from USDA was a Community Facilities grant for the completion of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail in Hardwick. The grant pre-dated the decision by the State of Vermont to oversee the completion of the LVRT and to retain control over the trail system.

USDA agreed to allow the funds to be transferred to the pedestrian bridge project. The transfer was contingent upon using a portion of the funds to create a loop between the LVRT and the pedestrian bridge/Downtown Hardwick. The December 2022 Local Motion proposal was an initial step in addressing this aspect of the funding. To fulfill the requirements of the USDA grant, the Town of Hardwick will need to allocate funds to the loop project and implement aspects in a timely manner. The Planning Commission has been asked to identify and recommend components of the Local Motion proposal that can make the link between the LVRT and the Downtown safer for bikes and pedestrians. The short-term suggestions will be forwarded to the Select Board as quickly as possible – hopefully by May 2023. \$12,000 was set aside for this aspect of the grant.

In the future, additional recommendations for the eventual opening of the pedestrian bridge will be made.

**Motion: None**

**Hardwick-LVRT Connector Loop Proposal:**

The recommendations from the Planning Commission will focus on the short-term aspects which are not being considered by the LVRT committee. There will be overlapping sections - for example, the pause park next to the Memorial Park.

Draft version of the initial recommendation list is as follows:

1. Remove the centerline from North Main Street (*time sensitive – centerline is currently faded from the winter travel. Removal will need to be flagged immediately if it is to be implemented this spring*).
2. Create a bike lane in the uphill direction on North Main Street – from the Route 15 intersection to the LVRT crossing (continuation of the bike lane to Hazen Union will be discussed in the longer term recommendations).
3. Create ample bike parking at the pause park next to the Memorial Park. Encourage bikers to leave their bikes and walk down to the downtown. Story walk? (Overlap with the LVRT committee).
4. Create and install signage on the LVRT and in the Downtown (Overlap with the LVRT committee).
5. Install sharrows on the downhill lane of North Main Street from the LVRT crossing to the Route 15 intersection (continuation of the sharrows concept to Hazen Union will be discussed in the longer term recommendations).
6. Install bike racks in the Peace Park – adjacent to the Civic Standard.
7. Install bike racks and/or bike corrals near the Hardwick Inn and/or the Hardwick Village Laundromat. (*Kristen will talk to Larry Hamel of the Hardwick Inn and to the new owners of the Laundry – Derek Richardson and Leesa Jean Gravel*).
8. Add a crosswalk on North Main Street near the car bridge (*time sensitive – crosswalks are currently faded from the winter travel. New crosswalks will need to be flagged immediately if they are to be implemented this spring*).
9. Add three intersection crosswalks at the intersection of East Church Street/Church Street and North Main Street. A crosswalk currently exists over Church Street (*time sensitive – crosswalks are currently faded from the winter travel. New crosswalks will need to be flagged immediately if they are to be implemented this spring*).
10. Remove the crosswalk which currently spans North Main Street near Highland Avenue (*time sensitive – crosswalks are currently faded from the winter travel. Elimination of crosswalks will need to be flagged immediately if they are to be implemented this spring*)

Joyce Mandeville suggested an early May walking visit to finalize the recommendation list. The final version will need to be submitted to the Select Board prior to the Memorial Day weekend. After that time, the time-sensitive items will miss the street painting window.

**Town of Hardwick projects:**

The Town currently owns a parcel next to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and across Route 15 from Lamoille Valley Ford's main campus on Treatment Plant Road. Lamoille Valley Ford has initiated conversations with the Town Manager and the Select Board regarding the possibility of purchasing this parcel. The dealership must provide 10 chargers on franchise-owned property to be certified as a Ford EV dealer. The parcel had been targeted for development into parking for the Yellow Barn project and for the LVRT. Lamoille Valley Ford has proposed a collaboration with the town to create a parking area for the public with EV chargers available to

everyone. The dealership recently forwarded conceptual drawings to the town for review. The drawings were provided to the Planning Commission for their input.

Shari Cornish expressed reservations with the proposal. As this is publicly owned land, she would prefer to proceed with caution and to verify that the Yellow Barn will actually need additional parking.

The following additional concerns were expressed:

- The main Lamoille Valley Ford campus has ample property. Why can't the chargers be located on their existing campus?
- Will LVF's vehicles be parked at the new chargers? Will the public really be able to use the parking/EV chargers?
- What are Ford's motives as a corporate structure?
- This is a key parcel of public land – at the entrance to Hardwick. Will the parking area be maintained to keep it attractive to visitors?

The Planning Commission crafted the following response to the conceptual drawings: **“After a thorough discussion of the conceptual drawings from Lamoille Valley Ford, the Hardwick Planning Commission does not support the sale of the Town's Treatment Plant Road property at this time”.**

***Motion: To forward the adopted response to the Lamoille Valley Ford conceptual drawings to the Hardwick Select Board.***

Ken Davis made the motion and Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor.

#### **Phase II:**

The Planning Commission will review the concept of the loading and delivery space in downtown Hardwick at a future meeting.

#### **Updates from Commission Members or the Zoning Administrator:**

None at this time.

***Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.***

Ken Davis made the motion and Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor.

The meeting ended at 7:55 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on April 11, 2023 by Zoom

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA