

Hardwick Planning Commission
September 10, 2024
Via Zoom due to Illness
Minutes

HPC Members Present: Shari Cornish; Jim Lewis; Bud Stevens; Dave Gross, Chair; Michael Haveson; Gillian D’Acierno (New! 2nd Alternate) and Kole (1st Alternate).

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

Absent: Larry Fliegelman (Kole assumes his vote), and Ken Davis (Gillian D’Acierno assumes his vote).

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:30 pm and transferred the role of Chair to Shari Cornish due to illness and the absence of the Vice Chair (Ken). Kole moved to approve the agenda as written. Michael Haveson seconded. All members were in favor. Kole moved to approve the August 13, 2024 meeting minutes as written. Bud Stevens seconded. All members were in favor.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – Tracy Martin

Building Better Connections – This project is working with a consultant and a dedicated steering committee to create a vision/plan for the Village of East Hardwick. The survey component was closed in late August and 61 responses were received (approximately 200 were mailed out to East Hardwick residents and owners).

The survey consisted of 2 open-ended questions. Participants were asked to observe what should be preserved in East Hardwick – primary responses included walkability, the Grange hall, the drinking water system, and the community. Participants were also asked what they would like to improve in East Hardwick. Primary responses included the Bridge over the Lamoille River (#0004), housing options, sidewalks, and traffic patterns/speed.

In addition to the surveys, the first of two village suppers were held at the Grange Building in August – approximately 50 to 55 people attended. Idea boards were incorporated into the event. Ideas included: better access to the river, general improvements to pedestrian and bike safety, utilizing the LVRT, speed/traffic, improving and adding to housing stock, and what to do with the Little Library site. The current building on the site needs to be demolished due to extreme deterioration (despite efforts by the East Hardwick community). A second community supper will be in November. Specific projects and the storm water and Clean Water elements need to be addressed.

Transportation Alternatives – This grant will fund a consultant who will conduct a scoping study of Mill Street and Main Street in downtown Hardwick. The approximate area of study will be from the Hays/Jiffy Mart location to the Civic Standard. Tracy will be issuing the RFP by the end of September. A consultant will (hopefully) be retained by November (2024). Since this is a scoping study, the Town Manager will serve as the Project Manager.

The LVRT - State signage has been installed for the trail system, parking etc. A contractor has been hired to install the town kiosks at the trailheads. Recreation maps have been created (and printed) and will be in the kiosks once they are ready to utilize.

The Tree Planting Grant - \$30,000 was received to plant 30 trees in the designated downtown. This grant program is being organized by the Downtown Partnership in coordination with the Conservation Commission. Applications for tree locations are now available and will close on December 31, 2024. The goal is to have 15 trees on private property. The residual will be in public spaces. The organizing groups are seeking to have an event in October (2024) to plant the first tree. The Tree Warden will be working with each location to decide which trees will be best suited based on soil types.

Motion: N/A

Updates from the Bylaw Modernization Consultant – Heather Carrington (not in attendance)

The Select Board voted to accept and adopt Unified Development Bylaws Amendment/Update on Thursday, September 5, 2024. The new zoning bylaws will be in effect as of September 26, 2024. Heather is completing the paperwork for the Bylaw Modernization grant and the town of Hardwick has met the deadlines to receive a refund of our matching funds.

Motion: N/A

AARP Walkability Studies:

The South Main Street AARP Walkability Study (with labels) was presented to the Select Board on August 1, August 15, and September 5, 2024. The proposal for the possible crosswalk was verbally rejected by the Road Foreman (Tom Fadden) and members of the Select Board as the location cannot be made handicap accessible. A verbal agreement was introduced to paint a temporary sidewalk or lane (on South Main Street) and perhaps install a crosswalk near Lower Cherry Street. No motion has been made at this time.

Motion: N/A

Lori Ferland contacted the Zoning Office and suggested that an AARP Walkability Study be conducted on Wolcott Street. The HPC will conduct a study on September 23, 2024 at 10 am. The review will begin at the Hardwick Fire Station parking lot. Kristen has provided Lori with this information and invited her to attend.

Flood Recovery – Hazard Mitigation projects:

No additional information at this time.

Motion: N/A

Long Term Community Recovery Plan:

No additional information at this time.

Motion: N/A

Village Center Zoning District in East Hardwick:

Currently, the East Hardwick village center is located in the Central Business and the Compact Residential zoning districts (with a small element of Highway Mixed Use). The conditions present in East Hardwick do not match either zoning district. With the Better Connections information, the Hardwick Planning Commission could begin creating a new zoning district – Village Center – that better reflects East Hardwick’s current and future growth patterns. The Village Center zoning district would probably have the dimensional standards of the Central Business district but might not have the same conditional uses (which are more appropriate for

the Hardwick Downtown). In October, the HPC will begin to review the locations of the current districts and make recommendations for the parameters of the potential new zoning district. Outreach will occur as soon as recommendations are solidified. Tracy Martin recommended coordinating with the Better Connections consultant and steering committee.

Phases I and II:

N/A

Motion: N/A

Short Term Rentals:

N/A

Motion: N/A

Hardwick Ecological Inventory:

N/A

Updates from Commission Members or the Zoning Administrator:

The Agency of Natural Resources offers free 6-part environmental leadership training. Kole, Jim Lewis, and Gillian D’Acierno signed up to attend from Hardwick.

Motion: N/A

Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.

Kole made the motion and Michael Haveson seconded. All members were in favor.

The meeting ended at 7:40 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on October 8, 2024 on the 3rd Floor of the Memorial Building and via Zoom. This meeting will be recorded to comply with the new State Rules.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA