

Hardwick Planning Commission
February 8, 2022
Via Zoom
Minutes

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

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator (ZA); David Upson, Jr., Town Manager; Thorolf von Walsun, Hardwick Gazette reporter.

Absent: Jim Lewis

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:33 pm. Ken Davis moved to approve the agenda. Michael Haveson seconded. All members were in favor. Ken Davis moved to approve the December 14, 2021 meeting minutes as written. Michael Haveson seconded. All members were in favor.

The upcoming town meeting ballot contains two questions regarding the inclusion of retail cannabis within the Town of Hardwick. A committee was formed by the Select Board – David Upson, Dave Gross, Brendan Bier, and Jason Di Guilio (Hazen principal). The committee will be providing an information review for the voters within the next week. The relevant questions are Article 20 (retail cannabis) and Article 21 (integrated sales). Both articles contain a provision to appoint the Select Board to act as a local Cannabis Control Commission. The Select Board will host a Zoom meeting on February 17th, between 5:30 and 6:00 pm for the purpose of answering questions about the ballot items, including retail cannabis.

State laws set forth a required 500 feet buffer around school properties. Dave has reviewed the area around Hazen Union and Hardwick Elementary. A large portion of downtown Hardwick will be within that buffer. The exception is the area around the Lamoille River Bridge on North Main Street in Hardwick. The former bank building, the Hardwick Inn and the Laundry are all outside of the two buffer zones. The Hazen principal has concerns about placing cannabis retail on the route that most students walk to Hazen. The route is used throughout the day when school is in session. Dave Gross noted that retail sales will include cannabis edibles.

The Planning Commission reviewed the questions formulated by the Stowe Planning Commission. The questions provided a basic framework for later discussions regarding retail cannabis. At this time, the Commission only intends to define which zoning districts will allow retail cannabis establishments. Central Business and the Highway Mixed Use zoning district were referenced during the meeting. These two districts are currently the zones where retail sales are permitted. The Commission will need to make a more extensive review before making a final recommendation. Review will occur after the town votes on the ballot articles.

David Upson, Jr., the Hardwick Town Manager, joined the Zoom meeting. Mr. Upson reported that the Town of Hardwick will be pursuing a more robust capital planning program to address future issues with infrastructure. He utilized the need for extensive work on West Church Street as an example of an extensive planning project. The scoping study, public hearings, and budgeting aspects will need time and money. The Select Board is examining the possibility of hiring a planning intern from the Cornell program to assist with the capital planning. Mr. Upson noted that the Planning Commission can, by statute, participate in the creation/maintenance of a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan. The Town currently has a Capital Improvement Three-Year Plan which does not cover all infrastructures within the town (bridges, etc.). Mr. Upson envisions engaging the Planning Commission in the work of hosting and assisting with public hearings for various planning projects.

Ken Davis made the following motion: "The Hardwick Planning Commission supports the creation of a more comprehensive Hardwick Capital Improvement Plan." Joyce Mandeville seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

The Planning Commission was not able to engage in a discussion about zoning bylaw updates due to time constraints. This review will occur at the March 8th meeting. There are new Accessory Dwelling Unit regulations to be considered (affordable housing concerns), as well as other items of interest. Kristen will distill the upcoming information and forward it to Commission members next week. The information will also be posted on the Planning Commission web page.

New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC d/b/a AT&T has filed a petition to receive a Certificate of Public Good for installation of a wireless telecommunications facility on an existing tower on Hopkins Hill. The Public Utility Commission has again extended the ending date for public comments to March 1, 2022.

The next HPC meeting will be conducted by Zoom. The date will be March 8, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

Ken Davis moved to close the meeting at 8:13 pm. Michael Haveson seconded. All members were in favor.

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~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA