

Hardwick Planning Commission
July 13, 2022
Zoom Meeting

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

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator and Heather Carrington.

Absent: None

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:30 pm. Ken Davis moved to approve the agenda as written. Shari Cornish seconded. All members were in favor. Shari Cornish moved to approve the May 10, 2022 meeting minutes as written. Ken Davis seconded. All members were in favor. Shari Cornish moved to approve the June 14, 2022 meeting minutes as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor.

Phase II:

The Planning Commission approved the draft version of the AARP walkability review from May 18, 2022. Comments were received by email from the chair of EHNO's safety committee (Mike Lance). The Planning Commission elected to continue to follow the same format of the walk audit as the previous audits. While the feedback was beneficial and appreciated, the decision was made to include the email as an addendum to the walk audit.

Motion: Jim Lewis made the motion to approve the May 10, 2002 Walk Audit of East Hardwick and to forward said audit to the Hardwick Select board for their consideration. Ken Davis seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

Kristen verified with the commission that the comments from Mike Lance would be included in the submission as an addendum to the audit. Color copies of the audit will be made available to the members of the Select Board.

Local Motion has submitted a proposal for pedestrian and traffic safety updates in East Hardwick's village center. This is a preliminary examination of the crosswalks and intersections in East Hardwick. The draft will be reviewed on Friday, July 15, 2022 by the executive board of the East Hardwick Neighborhood Organization (EHNO). Once the initial proposal is finalized, the end product will be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

Michael Haveson reported that the two speed bumps have made a difference overall in the West Church neighborhood. However, the speed bumps should span the entire street. The current configuration allows drivers to drive onto the sidewalk and house lawns to avoid the bump entirely. Young drivers have been stealing the cones that are placed near the speed bumps (Michael has videos and photographs). The police and David Upson have been notified. Michael supports extending the speed bumps and adding a third one to the street.

The intersection of Routes 14, 15, and 16 (the blinking light intersection) continues to have people crossing through the intersection despite the lack of a crosswalk. The fence may have helped the situation initially but the crossing still occurs. Signage may help anyone who is truly looking for a crosswalk.

Jim Lewis noted that the parking lot of the new Co-op location has been utilized as a U-turn location. Jim was nearly hit by a car which made this maneuver. The concern is that a pedestrian or a biker may not be seen and may be hit by a vehicle. Kristen will provide this information to the Co-op (Chris Duff).

Zoning Updates:

Kristen Leahy examined the updated statutes on Accessory Dwelling Units and the Town of Hardwick has addressed all of the updates. The Planning Commission will hold their public hearing for the proposed updates on August 9, 2022 at 6:30 pm. (The regular meeting will follow).

Motion: Shari Cornish made the motion to accept the slate of proposed zoning bylaw changes as presented in the “Hardwick Planning Commission Warning of Public Hearing.” The hearing will take place on August 9, 2022. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor.

The warning of public hearing states the following:

Statement of Purpose:

The proposed changes to the Hardwick Unified Development Bylaw (known hereafter as “Bylaw”) will serve the following purposes:

- 1) **Table 2.4 Compact Residential District** – Section (C) Conditional Uses list will include “27 Restaurant.
- 2) **Table 2.6 Rural Residential District** – Section (C) Conditional Uses list will include #18 Mixed Use and #25 Restaurant.
- 3) **Section 4.2 Accessory Dwelling** – Subsection A 1 is changed from “~~owner-occupied~~ single family dwelling” to “single family dwelling on an owner-occupied lot.” Subsection A1 and A2 are altered to shift the Accessory Dwelling unit size from 800 to 900 square feet. Subsection A3 has the following change: “meet setback requirements for ~~principal~~ accessory structures for the district in which they are located.”
- 4) Boundary Amendment to expand the Highway Mixed-Use District into the Village Neighborhood District on Granite Street and Brook Street (Tax Map 23, Lots 3, 4, and 62).

Updates from Commission Members:

Form-based code has been mentioned in multiple venues (especially with the question of creating affordable housing). As a result, the HPC was provided an introduction to this planning approach. Heather Carrington, who has been hired as the Downtown Designation consultant, works in Winooski and is very familiar with the form-based code. Winooski utilizes the form-based code create vitality on the edges of their town and in their neighborhoods.

Winooski adopted form-based code to catalyze growth, grow the grand list, and to solve the housing problem. With the form-based code approach, uses receive an administrator’s approval based on whether the proposal matches the code. This approach speeds the process and cuts the “soft costs” accrued by developers.

The process is front-loaded. Residents participate when the code is being created which makes the later review process quicker.

Winooski sought to have more multi-family dwellings as a way to create in-fill but each town will be different. The town can make the code meet what the town needs. Questions such as how many stories will be allowed will vary by town. Heather cautioned that a town will need to be patient with a form-based code process.

Changes will need to be incremental. Changes should be adopted and re-considered over a set time frame (ie. 10 years).

Winooski used a much curated process. A consultant and the Regional Planning Commission assisted with the adoption. Two years were needed to create the form-based code. Two additional years were needed to create the underlying strategic plan and vision that formed the basis of the code and the goals of the code.

Winooski used postcards in 8 languages, outreach to elders and faith based entities, and included both the “old” and the “new” parts of town.

A municipal planning grant was used to pay for the process. Winooski had a small municipal staff.

Heather made a clarification of the definition of Form-based code. Form-based code examines the mass of buildings, setbacks and other aspects. It is not concerned with the uses. This is a set of parameters that construction must meet. The code can support and enhance a vibrant streetscape and neighborhood growth. The code simplifies zoning and clarifies what is needed in easy to understand terms.

There can be uses that are prohibited from an area and the code can effectively block certain uses (such as not allowing enough space for a large delivery truck to approach a structure).

The code could be applied to a small area of town or to the entire town. Heather proposed the possibility that a code could be applied to the Designated Downtown area. Hardwick will be submitting their application for a designated downtown in December 2022.

The current Development Review Board process in Hardwick can take 3-4 months and can be subjective or based on concerns of neighbors and can take longer if there is an appeal of the use. This can be a deterrent for business and/or new housing developments.

Ken Davis stated that uncertainty chases business away from a community.

A community conversation about development should occur to form the basis of the review of form-based code.

There is a Bylaw Modernization grant that is due in October. This may be useful for the review of the possibility of adopting form-based code in the downtown area. Kristen will communicate with Tracy Martin (new Community Development Coordinator) and David Upson. The HPC would like to pursue this grant.

The meeting ended at 7:52 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on August 9, 2022 with Zoom and in-person options. The public hearing will be first with the regular meeting to follow.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA