

Hardwick Planning Commission
February 7, 2023
Zoom Meeting
Minutes

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

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator; Tracy Martin, Community Development Coordinator; David Upson, Jr., Town Manager.

Absent: None

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:32 pm. Ken Davis moved to approve the agenda as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. Joyce Mandeville moved to approve the January 10, 2023 meeting minutes as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator:

Tracy Martin provided the monthly update on recent and upcoming grant applications. The Better Connections grant is highly competitive and is only received by 3-4 communities each funding cycle (every other year). The program is administered jointly by the Agency of Transportation and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Hardwick has previously applied for this grant in 2019 and in 2021 (neither proposal was approved).

The 2023 application will focus on hiring a planner to work with East Hardwick to create a comprehensive village plan. Several smaller feasibility and vision pieces have already been created, including the Local Motion review, the HPC pedestrian safety examination, and the Rail Trail access planning. The Town will also be requesting the additional \$30,000 for Clean Water assistance. These supplemental monies will assist with addressing the issue of run-off into the Lamoille River at the bridge.

Tracy requested a letter of support from the Hardwick Planning Commission with references to the support found in the Hardwick Municipal plan.

Motion: To provide a letter of support from the Hardwick Planning Commission for the Better Connections grant application.

Shari Cornish made the motion and Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. (*The letter was written, reviewed by Dave Gross and has been forwarded to Tracy Martin – 2/9/23 KL*).

If East Hardwick receives the Better Connections grant, then it will become eligible (as a village center) for the Downtown Transportation Fund monies in the future.

The Bylaw Modernization Grant was received by 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. The Request for Proposals has been forwarded to the Planners' List Serv, included on the Town website, provided to multiple planning consultants, and posted in the News and Citizen. Two HPC members are requested for participation on the selection committee. The proposal deadline is March 1, 2023, with a start date of April 3, 2023. Jim Lewis and Shari Cornish offered to participate.

If the bylaws generated by the planner are adopted by Hardwick within the 2 year cycle, then the Town's monetary match (10%) will be returned. This aspect provides additional incentive to complete the review and adoption in a timely manner.

Updates from the Town Manager:

The Town currently owns a parcel next to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and across Route 15 from Lamoille Valley Ford's main campus (the parcel previously hosted the Farmer's Market). 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.

David Upson reported that the parcel is encumbered by the LVRT ROW. He has been in conversation with Tyler Hobbs at the Agency of Transportation. Tyler is amenable to the creation of trailhead parking at this location.

Shari Cornish expressed reservations with the proposal because it may encourage pedestrian crossing on Route 15. In addition, 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.

Dave Gross had the following concerns:

- 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 the ramifications of surrendering another section of green space in this section of Hardwick?
- What are Ford's motives as a corporate structure?
- Can the parking be moved toward the septic lagoons – away from Route 15?
- This is a key parcel of public land – at the entrance to Hardwick. Will another parking area be attractive to visitors? A green spot may invite people to stop and access the Yellow Barn

Dave recommended a comprehensive review of the proposed sale and he suggested that no decisions should be rendered quickly.

David Upson reported that the Town has hired a contractor for the Yellow Barn project. They will be breaking ground this spring. Lamoille Valley Ford has chargers for their vehicles on their main campus. They do not intend to utilize the proposed chargers. The property near the septic lagoons has wetland drainage and cannot be developed. There will need to be a serious investment in the electrical grid to accommodate the electrical load of the Yellow Barn and the charging stations. There will probably be a cost sharing approach designed for this aspect. In addition, the Town is working with HED to address the need and the cost of EV chargers in Hardwick (similar to the approach developed by Stowe).

Phase II:

The HPC made note of which tasks in the Phase 1 (2020) recommendations have not yet been fulfilled. Town Manager responded prior to the meeting (in red).

1. Painting crosswalks with color. Originally slated to begin in spring 2021. Easy, relatively cheap. Needs to be accomplished. *Response: State has more work to finish in the Spring of 2023 and has control over this aspect. Town will need to talk to the State.*
2. The 25 MPH speed sign has been installed. General consensus is that the location in front of the Buffalo Mountain Co-op is less effective than prior to Glenside Avenue. *Town Manager will investigate.*
3. Install signage to direct cars to alternate parking. *Alternate parking will not be available until the pedestrian bridge is operational.*
4. Educate younger riders about sidewalk and crosswalk safety. *The Schools and the Driver's Education programs would work on this aspect. Conversation with them?*
5. Crosswalks *Ongoing.*
6. Stop/Wait/Wave signs have disappeared. Annual installation? *In the Spring – again, the State's contract is involved.*
7. Upgrade town's parking area at Mill Street and Perry Street. Lot appears to be leveled and cleaned but the bike rack and the delineation of spaces are not present. *Potential site of a new building with housing.*
8. The parking spaces in the intersection of Routes 14 and 15 have been removed but vehicles continue to utilize the spaces. Enforcement? Better signage? Cones? *Police have been instructed to issue written warnings for vehicles that are parked in the spaces. Space cannot be blocked by planters, etc due to the turning radius of trucks. Town Manager suggested that returning the 2 spaces prior to the light to 15 minute parking. Another suggestion was to shift the area to "No parking from 8 – 1 due to high volume truck traffic." Parking ordinance would need to be shifted.*

David Upson reported that the downtown paving project is currently on a winter shut-down. The paint that was applied in the late fall is not adhering to the asphalt. The signs and crosswalks will be re-visited in the spring. The state will only utilize certain colors for painting jobs. The speed sign was placed in front of the Buffalo Mountain Coop to allow additional sunlight to provide the solar energy needed. He also stated that a new issue has arisen with the public parking across from the Coop's new location. The coop employees are filling the public parking lot and this has erased the additional public parking. David Upson will be working with Buffalo Mountain to craft a solution to this new aspect.

Dave noted that having any parking in the intersection would be problematic as these spaces are illegal. He suggested that the Town utilize additional signage and cones to delineate the no-parking section.

Shari inquired about the handicap parking space next to the Flower Basket and Galaxy Bookstore. She suggested that a more user-friendly location would be next to the crosswalk by the Village Diner (near Positive Pie).

Motion: N/A

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

Updates from Commission Members or the Zoning Administrator:

Hardwick's Downtown designation is now official. The Designated Downtown includes Atkins Field, the Pedestrian Bridge, and the Town Garage/Creamery Road, as well as the original Village Center location. The Hardwick Downtown Partnership will provide leadership to the non-profit activities.

The SE group will have conceptual drawings of the Pedestrian Bridge Park available at Town meeting.

Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.

Ken Davis made the motion and Jim Lewis seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

The meeting ended at 7:47 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on March 14, 2023 by Zoom

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA