

Hardwick Planning Commission
May 9, 2023
Zoom Meeting
Minutes

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

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator; Heather Carrington, CCDS, LLC Consultant; Kole, community member; Bud Stevens, community member; and Larry Fliegelman, community member.

Absent: Shari Cornish and Jim Lewis

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:33 pm. Ken Davis moved to approve the agenda with clarification changes. Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor. Ken Davis moved to approve the April 11, 2023 meeting minutes as written. Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – given by the Zoning Administrator:

VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program

The intent of the program is to improve access and safety for pedestrians and bicycles through planning, design and construction of infrastructure projects. If the Town of Hardwick decides to apply, we will be asking for \$75,000 for the completion of the pedestrian bridge project. The deadline for the application is June 9, 2023. A demonstration of support from the Planning Commission would significantly strengthen the application.

Motion: To provide a letter of support for the VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program application if the Select Board votes to affirm said application.

Joyce Mandeville made the motion. Ken Davis provided the second. All members were in favor.

The Zoning Administrator will provide written support with Municipal Plan references to the Community Development Coordinator if the Select Board votes to affirm this application.

Updates from the Bylaw Modernization Consultant – Heather Carrington

Heather Carrington proposed a 6-Month Work Plan to the Hardwick Planning Commission. Each month has action items and goals/outcomes. There are four zoning districts in the targeted area – Central Business (Hardwick and East Hardwick), Highway Mixed Use, Village Neighborhood, and Compact Residential. Each meeting will explore one zoning district and the final meeting (October 10, 2023) will examine the alignment of the Development Review Process. In addition, there will be two public engagement meetings. The first will focus on Central Business and Highway Mixed Use. The second will focus on Village Neighborhood and Compact Residential. The Planning Commission reviewed the 6-Month Work Plan and concurred that the approach would be feasible.

Motion: To adopt the 6-month work plan from Heather Carrington; CCDS, LLC Consultant.

Michael Haveson made the motion. Ken Davis provided the second. All members were in favor.

Heather Carrington presented her initial results of the stakeholder input study.

1. Parking requirements are currently a barrier to development
2. Density limits are currently a barrier to development

3. Unpredictability of the Development Review Board process is also a barrier to development. Time and soft costs were referenced. The Hardwick DRB is more responsive than other towns but the process is still unpredictable.

In addition, state permitting (i.e. Act 250) is an obstacle for development. The Town of Hardwick may wish to engage in state advocacy on this issue.

The Stakeholder input for this study is ongoing. Heather Carrington will be formulating a framework of suggestions once the study is complete.

The zoning district which was discussed at the May 9, 2023 meeting was the Central Business district. The Hardwick downtown varies greatly from the East Hardwick village center, but both areas are contained within this zoning district. At the recommendation of the Planning Commission members, the HPC will focus on the Hardwick Downtown and wait to make changes that reflect East Hardwick.

East Hardwick should potentially be shifted to a new zoning district. The Village Center district, which is described in the "Great Neighborhoods" document, would more closely align with the existing development trends.

Central Business (Hardwick Downtown) Recommendations:

- Minimum lot size doesn't match the current sizes. Align with median or average size. In Downtown Hardwick 25% of existing parcels are non-conforming (under minimum size).
- Parking – currently there are 3 standards for parking requirements in housing situations. 2 spaces are required for a Single Family Dwelling or a Two Family Dwelling; 1.5 spaces are required for a Multi-Family Dwelling; and 1 space is required for an Accessory Dwelling Unit. The parking requirements should be altered to have a standard size for all housing situations. **Not currently recommending the elimination of the parking minimum.**
- Allowable uses are limited. Review the Conditional Uses – Housing, Mixed Use and Retail might align better with Permitted/Allowable uses in this district.
- Street standards – implement complete streets standards.

Secondary options:

1. Consider setting maximum setbacks in Central Business.
2. Consider requiring new parking to be located behind or, at least, on the side of structures. If your proposal includes front parking, then have the DRB review the concept.
3. Consider requiring entrances facing the street, percentages of glazing and prohibitions of blank walls.

Central Business Thoughts from community members:

Bud Stevens inquired as to how many more buildings can happen in the Central Business district. How will this impact the future? Mr. Stevens stated that the current zoning bylaws are not clear. Developers need to attend DRB hearings for practically everything in the Downtown. The bylaw language needs to be more concise.

Dave Gross stated that the Development Review Board is the chance for the community to weigh in on a project. The Hardwick DRB serves that function well and provides an opportunity for neighbors to have their opinions considered.

Heather Carrington concurred that Hardwick is a neighborly community but suggested that there may be a better way to provide that communication opportunity. There is value in having those conversations and in engaging neighbors before a development process. There may be a way to allow this to happen without the uncertainty of the DRB process.

Bud Stevens mentioned the possibility of a sketch plan review process.

The Public Engagement meetings will be organized and hosted by Heather Carrington and the Zoning Administrator.

Motion: None

Please note that from this point onward, the Zoning Administrator (who writes the minutes) was experiencing low internet bandwidth. Minutes are sparse due to that technology glitch.

Hardwick-LVRT Connector Loop Proposal:

Kristen reported that Larry Hamel suggested placing a bike rack near the bridge and a second rack on the buffered island near the crosswalk. Other recommendations from Mr. Hamel will be discussed at the June meeting. A general overview of the proposal was provided to the community members who were in attendance.

Motion: None.

Town of Hardwick projects:

The Conservation Commission will be conducting a Natural Resources Inventory Project. The Kick-off Event will be held on Wednesday, May 17th at 7 pm. Matt Peters will be conducting the Inventory.

Motion: None

Phase II:

None at this time.

Updates from Commission Members or the Zoning Administrator:

The HPC agreed to meet in-person at the June 13th meeting.

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 7:53 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on June 13, 2023 on the 3rd Floor of the Memorial Building.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA