

Hardwick Planning Commission
September 12, 2023
3rd Floor, Memorial Building, Hardwick
Minutes

HPC Members Present: Joyce Mandeville; Michael Haveson; Shari Cornish; Jim Lewis; Kole (2nd Alternate); Bud Stevens (1st Alternate); Larry Fliegelman; and Dave Gross, Chair

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

Absent: Ken Davis (*Bud Stevens assumes his vote for this meeting*)

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:30 pm. Shari Cornish moved to approve the agenda as written. Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor. Shari Cornish moved to approve the August 8, 2023 meeting minutes as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – Tracy Martin

Tracy Martin introduced the Transportation Alternatives program to the Hardwick Planning Commission. The TA program is federally funded and administered by the Municipal Services division of the Agency of Transportation. The program provides two types of funding for “alternative” methods of movement (pedestrian/biking/etc) - Scoping Studies and Design/Construction.

Mill Street is a problematic section of town with a missing sidewalk, additional pedestrian and bicycle traffic, multiple driveways, etc. The combination of the various aspects is complicated and has been identified in a walking study by the Hardwick Planning Commission. Tracy proposed seeking funding for a Scoping Study in this area. The Transportation Alternatives program covers 80% of the cost and can utilize in-kind matches for the remaining 20% (more common in the Design/Construction funding path). If a Scoping Study grant is approved, then the Town has the ability to apply for a Design & Construction grant in the following funding cycle. The application is due in mid-December.

Motion: To recommend to the Hardwick Select Board that the Town of Hardwick should apply to the Transportation Alternatives program through the Agency of Transportation for a Scoping Study grant for the Mill Street area.

Larry Fliegelman made the motion and Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor.

Tracy discussed possible projects for the Municipal Planning Grant, which is due on November 1, 2023. The Planning Commission agreed that they do not need to seek additional funding at this time. The Bylaw Modernization grant and the future Floodplain/River Corridor regulation review require the bulk of the Planning Commission time. Another proposal under consideration is a planning grant for the Town Garage at its current location. The Commission provided general support for this concept and Tracy will return to the HPC in October for a letter of support if the Select Board approves the pursuit of the grant application.

Updates from the Bylaw Modernization Consultant – Heather Carrington is not available this week.

Public Forum

The first Public Forum will be on September 28th at 6 pm at the Hardwick Town House. This forum will be a joint presentation from Heather Carrington and Kristen Leahy. The presentation will focus on the new requirements from the HOME Act and how the changes will impact Hardwick. This outreach will help to clarify areas of the bylaw amendment that the Town of Hardwick is required to change under state law. This will also provide an opportunity to inform potential housing developers about the coming changes which may assist them in creating more housing opportunity in the future.

The forum will not merely state the statutory requirements but make the connection with the Town's stated goals (Town Plan). Heather provided draft copies of her slides, which the Planning Commission reviewed. The Commission had questions about the age of certain statistics and agreed that the issue of the Flood Hazard Area Overlay needs to be addressed in some manner as the July 2023 flooding occurred in both the Highway Mixed Use and the Village Neighborhood zoning districts. Kristen will relay the questions and observations to Heather next week. The slides will be uploaded to the town website after the public information session.

Motion: None

Phase II:

Shari Cornish provided the Commission members with a selection of sign options for the downtown area. Signage is being sought to improve the parking and traffic flow in the downtown area. Currently, there is no "Exit only" sign for the Village Diner Parking lot and the two hour parking sign is only on the beginning and end of the existing on-street parking. In addition, the no parking area in the intersection needs to be delineated by yellow in the strips and yellow on the curb. The other recommendation was to change the currently existing handicap parking spot near the Flower Basket into a 15 minute loading zone during business hours.

The Planning Commission members support the Select Board increasing signs for parking, crosswalks and time constraints. These additional signs should be beneficial to the general downtown area. In addition, the Planning Commission supports the installation of a crosswalk near Summer Street or Spring Street. The exact placement will require a site visit. Kristen will convey the support to the Town Manager, David Upson (*done – 9-13-23*)

Updates from Commission Members or the Zoning Administrator:

The Zoning Administrator proposed adding the following two permitted uses to the Industrial zoning district:

1. Accessory Structure less than or equal to 500 sq. ft. (to a Conditional Use).
2. Addition to an existing Conditional Use that is less than or equal to 500 square feet.

The Planning Commission provided general support for the proposal. The Development Review Board and the legal team at VLCT will be consulted prior to an HPC vote on the language.

The HPC was also provided a chance to review the Interim Floodplain language which was adopted by the Select Board to respond to the July 2023 flooding event. This language may be included in future Floodplain regulations with the addition of an indicator which would initiate the use of the emergency regulations (a federal declaration of emergency, for example).

Motion: None

Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.

Larry Fliegelman made the motion and Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor.

The meeting ended at 8:10 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on October 10, 2023 on the 3rd Floor of the Memorial Building.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA