

Hardwick Planning Commission
October 10, 2023
3rd Floor, Memorial Building, Hardwick
Minutes

HPC Members Present: Joyce Mandeville; Ken Davis; Shari Cornish; Jim Lewis; Kole (2nd Alternate); and Dave Gross, Chair

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator; Heather Carrington, CCDS, LLC Consultant; and (for a short period of time – Scott Merrill, Resident).

Absent: Michael Haveson; Bud Stevens (1st Alternate); Larry Fliegelman (*Kole assumes a vote for this meeting*)

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:30 pm. Ken Davis moved to approve the agenda as amended. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. Shari Cornish moved to approve the September 12, 2023 meeting minutes as written. Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – Tracy Martin

No updates at this meeting.

Motion: None.

Updates from the Bylaw Modernization Consultant – Heather Carrington

Development Review Process

Heather noted to the HPC that the Planning Commission has greatly reduced the need for conditional use approval by increasing the list of housing types that are classified as allowable uses in the districts under consideration. She offered to work with the Zoning Administrator to develop a simplified application for small-scale development. The Zoning Administrator will review the current Conditional Use application with Heather and determine if a simplified application would be appropriate for Hardwick. Planning Commission members were not certain what would be defined as “small-scale” for a simplified application. Heather also recommended that the Planning Commission consider development of form-based code utilizing administrative approval in some districts in the future. The HPC has previously examined this approach and will review the possibility in future meetings.

Additional Issue to Address

Heather created a list of additional sections in the Hardwick Unified Development Bylaws that will need to be adjusted to match the HOME act and to align with the proposed changes to the Bylaws.

Section 3.6 (A) Existing Small lots currently require 1/8 acre which is 5,445 sf. The recommendation was to reduce this amount to 5,000 sf to align with the proposed minimum lot size changes.

Section 3.7 (A) Building Height – a bonus story for the affordable housing exemption needs to be added.

Section 4.13 (A) (3) Mobile Home Park – this section of bylaw requires 6,000 sf per mobile home. This should be amended to 5000 sf to align with the proposed changes.

Section 4.13 (A) (4) Mobile Home Park – this section of bylaw requires a 25 foot landscape buffer around the entire perimeter of a mobile home park. This higher standard should be removed from the bylaws.

Section 4.13 (A) (8) Mobile Home Park – this section of bylaw requires a minimum of 100 sf of indoor storage for each mobile home in the park. This higher standard should be removed from the bylaws.

Section 15 Protected Public Uses – inclusion of Temporary Shelter language to align with the HOME act.

Motion: To accept and include the remedies provided by Heather Carrington and discussed by the Hardwick Planning Commission for the “Additional Issues to Address on pages 2-3 of Memo dated 10/5/23 in the draft version of the Bylaw Modernization Update.

Shari Cornish made the Motion and Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor.

Dimensional Standards – Frontage Minimum Requirements

Heather informed the Commission that there are significant non-conformities in the minimum frontage requirements. Additionally, with the reduction in minimum lot sizes, the frontage requirements need to be reviewed for alignment. Heather provided four options for each district. The options included the parcel conformity percentages.

~Central Business District~

Presently 26% of parcels are nonconforming to the 50 feet frontage requirement in this district.

Motion: To reduce the minimum frontage in the Central Business zoning district from 50 feet to 25 feet in the draft version of the Bylaw Modernization Update.

Shari Cornish made the motion and Kole seconded. All members were in favor.

~Highway Mixed Use District~

Presently 20% of parcels are nonconforming to the 100 feet frontage requirement in this district.

Motion: To reduce the minimum frontage in the Highway Mixed Use zoning district from 100 feet to 65 feet in the draft version of the Bylaw Modernization Update.

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

~Village Neighborhood District~

Presently 23% of parcels in the Village Neighborhood do not meet the minimum of 70 feet frontage.

Motion: To reduce the minimum frontage in the Village Neighborhood zoning district from 70 feet to 50 feet in the draft version of the Bylaw Modernization Update.

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

~Compact Residential District~

The Compact Residential District has three frontage standards – Class 1 is 70 feet, Class 2 is 100 feet and Class 3 is 150 feet.

Motion: To reduce the minimum frontage in the Compact Residential – Class 2 zoning district from 100 feet to 50 feet in the draft version of the Bylaw Modernization Update.

Shari Cornish made the motion and Kole seconded. All members were in favor.

After extended discussion, the Hardwick Planning Commission decided to propose a universal frontage amount in the Compact Residential zoning district.

Motion: To reduce the minimum frontage in the Compact Residential – Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 zoning district to 50 feet in the draft version of the Bylaw Modernization Update.

Shari Cornish made the motion and Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor.

Community Engagement Meeting #1

The first Community Engagement Meeting was not well attended – three members of the public participated. The concerns ranged from town wastewater capacity, overbuilding, and unsustainable growth. The Bylaw Modernization update will focus on infill within existing parcels.

The next Community Engagement Meeting will be on November 14, 2023 at 6:30 pm with a Zoom link and possibly HCTV (or a zoom video).

The Planning Commission will need to revisit the question of the Central Business lot sizes at a future meeting.

Phase II:

Shari introduced the topic of downtown Hardwick parking at the previous Select Board meeting. The Road crew will paint the curb yellow in the Route 14 and 15 intersection to identify the “no parking” zone. A sign for the 15 minute unloading and loading space near the Flower Basket will be obtained (former handicap spot).

Jersey barriers will be placed on School Street in East Hardwick and near the collapsing bridge near Greensboro Bend.

Updates from Commission Members or the Zoning Administrator:

Kristen updated the HPC on the issue of the 500 feet buffer for Cannabis Retail around the elementary school and the high school. The state statute delineates the buffer zone as being 500 feet **and** adjacent to the subject properties. This represents a shift in the HPC’s understanding of the statute. The original maps on the Planning Commission web page indicated that the buffer was 500 feet around each school. The maps have been removed. Portions of the downtown area will now be available to Cannabis Retail.

Motion: None

Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.

Ken Davis made the motion and Shari Cornish seconded. All members were in favor.

The meeting ended at 8:05 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on November 14, 2023 on the 3rd Floor of the Memorial Building.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA