

Hardwick Planning Commission
January 14, 2025
Hybrid – In-Person and Zoom options
Minutes

HPC Members Present: Dave Gross, Chair; Michael Haveson (by Zoom); Larry Fliegelman; Jim Lewis; Kole; and Gillian D’Acierno.

HPC Members Absent: Ken Davis (Kole assumes the seat); Bud Stevens (Gillian D’Acierno assumes the seat); and Shari Cornish

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator and Tracy Martin, Community Development Coordinator (by Zoom).

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:32 pm. Jim Lewis moved to approve the agenda as written. Kole seconded. All members were in favor. Kole moved to approve the October 8, 2024 meeting minutes as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. Kole moved to approve the December 10, 2024 meeting minutes as written. Jim Lewis seconded.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – Tracy Martin

Better Connections – Tracy is working with a Steering Committee and two consultants on a plan for East Hardwick with focus on multi-modal transportation and storm water improvements. The Steering Committee is working on a monthly basis with the consultants to organize and present the priorities as created by the surveys and public meetings. Currently, the work is divided into the following four groups:

1. Access and Linkages
2. Comfort and Image
3. Uses and Activities
4. Sociability

By March 2025, the project will have a community gathering for final feedback from the residents of East Hardwick. Due to the weather (winter), the gathering will probably occur in the Memorial Building. The State of Vermont has provided positive feedback to the draft plans.

Municipal Planning Grant (2025) – Tracy and Kristen are working together to submit a MPG for flood resiliency in the Granite Street Historic District (where the floodplain overlays the district – Wolcott Street, Brook Street, Lower Cherry Street, Granite Street, Cottage Street, and Elm Street). The grant will seek to find methods of floodplain restoration and flood resiliency in that area of town with the existing neighborhood. The Select Board approved of the submission of this application on January 2, 2025.

Motion: To provide a letter of support from the Hardwick Planning Commission for the Municipal Planning Grant application with a focus on flood resiliency in the floodplain area of the Granite Street Historic District.

Jim Lewis made the motion and Larry Fliegelman provided the second. All members were in favor.

MERP (2024) – Municipal Energy Resilience Program provided \$250,000 for the Town to increase energy resilience in the Town owned buildings. For example, heat pumps will be installed in the Public Safety Building.

The Pedestrian Bridge – The damaged structure will hopefully be constructed during the summer months of 2025. A final piece of the funding puzzle may be obtained from a second Downtown Transportation Fund update.

The Community Development Coordinator has an updated web presence that now resides under the Town Manager's web page. The ongoing and completed projects are noted and available for review with additional information.

(Please note that the Wi-Fi was intermittent during the CDC report and additional information was provided but not noted at this time).

AARP Walkability Studies:

No additional information at this time.

Motion: N/A.

Flood Recovery – Hazard Mitigation projects:

No additional information due to time constraints

Motion: N/A

Long Term Community Recovery Plan:

No additional information due to time constraints.

Motion: N/A

Village Center Zoning District in East Hardwick:

Currently, the East Hardwick village center is located in the Central Business and the Compact Residential and the Highway Mixed Use zoning districts. The conditions present in East Hardwick do not match these zoning districts. The HPC reviewed the draft version of the Village Center Zoning District and the draft location of the potential new zoning district. The Planning Commission created final draft versions for discussion with the impacted properties. Letters were sent to individual property owners and the Planning Commission hosted a listening session on December 10, 2024.

The following suggestions were received from the public at the December 10 session.

	Suggestions:	Community Member:
1.	Increase the dimensions, especially the side setback	Cheryl Michaels, Tracy Martin
2.	Move Group Homes to the Conditional Use list	Cheryl Michaels
3.	Move Multi-Family Dwellings to the C.U. list	Cheryl Michaels
4.	Return Forestry to the Permitted Use List	Susanne Gann
5.	Keep Highway Mixed Use as it currently exists	Warren Hill Jr.
6.	Reduce the stated height limit	Cheryl Michaels
7.	Remove Hotel/Motel from the Conditional Uses	Susanne Gann
8.	Create a new category of "Inn" with a size restriction in the definition (Conditional Use)	Cheryl Michaels

In addition, two emails were received regarding the Highway Mixed Use district, an email was received about reducing the height limit, and an email was received which recommended the creation of a new conditional use category – "Inn." (See January 14, 2025 attachments).

After a lengthy discussion among the Planning Commission members, the following changes and decisions were made for the new Village Center Zoning District:

1. The Highway Mixed Use zoning district will remain as it currently exists per the request of the majority of owners in that area (this area will not be included in the proposed Village Center zoning district).
2. Group Homes will continue to be permitted as this is a statutory requirement in the State of Vermont.
3. The Multi-Family Dwelling category will remain in the Permitted Use list. Currently, Multi-Family Dwellings are permitted uses in most zoning districts in Hardwick. This is an element of the effort to create more housing opportunities outside of the Town's floodplains.
4. Forestry will be added to the Permitted Use list.
5. Hotel/Motel will continue to be in the Conditional Use list. The definition of this category also covers Inns, and Hostels.

No decision has been reached regarding the side dimensions and the stated height limit. Both questions will continue to be considered at the February 2025 meeting.

Phases I and II:

N/A

Motion: N/A

Short Term Rentals:

N/A

Motion: N/A

Hardwick Ecological Inventory:

N/A

Updates from Commission Members:

Dave Gross recused himself from the Planning Commission (Jim Lewis provided Chair services for this time). East Hardwick Neighborhood Organization (EHNO) is applying for a grant from the Vermont Parks and Recreation Department to construct an LVRT trailhead on leased Agency of Transportation land in East Hardwick. EHNO would like a letter of support from the HPC for this request. The grant would be for \$50,000. There will be two parking spots, a water fountain/dog water fountain, a pavilion, a bike rack/repair station, interpretative signage, and a kiosk. The funding will also allow for the delineation of the wetlands and the wetland buffer.

Motion: To provide a letter of support from the Hardwick Planning Commission to the East Hardwick Neighborhood Organization for the creation of a LVRT trailhead in East Hardwick.

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

Dave Gross also informed the HPC that a feasibility study will be conducted on the Jackson Dam. The Jackson Dam will be reviewed for economic, recreation, flood resiliency, and environmental (aquatic and animal and plant health) aspects. More information will be available in February.

Updates from the Zoning Administrator:

The Planning, Zoning and Floodplain pages on the Town's website have been updated and should be more user-friendly in the future. Suggestions are always welcome.

Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.

Larry Fliegelman made the motion and Gillian D'Acierno seconded. All members were in favor.

The meeting ended at 8:05 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on February 11, 2025 on the 3rd Floor of the Memorial Building and via Zoom.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA