

Hardwick Planning Commission
February 11, 2025
Hybrid – In-Person and Zoom options
Minutes

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

HPC Members Absent: Shari Cornish (Kole assumes the seat)

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

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:35 pm. Ken Davis moved to approve the agenda as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. Jim Lewis moved to approve the January 14, 2025 meeting minutes as written. Dave Gross seconded. All members were in favor.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – Tracy Martin

Downtown Transportation Fund – The Downtown Transportation fund had previously provided grant money for the replacement of the Pedestrian Bridge. Hardwick will be returning to the Fund to seek the final piece of the funding puzzle. Heather Carrington is writing the grant for the Town (through a REDI grant). Hardwick has been allowed to re-apply but the Community Development Coordinator is uncertain as to whether we will receive the funding. Most of the funding for the Pedestrian Bridge construction is allocated and the work needs to occur this summer or Hardwick will begin to lose previously obtained funding.

Motion: To authorize the Hardwick Planning Commission to approve the Municipal Resolution for the Downtown Transportation Fund and to delegate the authority to sign the Municipal Resolution to the Chair of the Hardwick Planning Commission (Dave Gross).

Ken Davis made the motion and Jim Lewis provided the second. All members were in favor. Dave Gross signed and delivered the Municipal Resolution to the Community Development Coordinator. (The Hardwick Select Board had approved the Resolution at their February 6, 2025 meeting).

Better Connections – The project has been gaining speed and a draft is being finalized. There will be a community gathering for final feedback from the residents of East Hardwick on March 12, 2025 at 6:30 in the Memorial Building. **The Planning Commission members supported changing their meeting from March 11, 2025 to March 12, 2025 so that they can attend the presentation and learn about this planning tool.**

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

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

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). 1/14/25
2. Group Homes will continue to be permitted as this is a statutory requirement in the State of Vermont. 1/14/25
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. 1/14/25
4. Forestry will be added to the Permitted Use list. 1/14/25
5. Hotel/Motel will continue to be in the Conditional Use list. The definition of this category also covers Inns, and Hostels. 1/14/25
6. The 35 feet stated height limit will remain as suggested as this is a standard throughout the Town of Hardwick. 2/11/25

7. The proposed dimensions will be as follows: 5,000 square feet minimum lot size (same); 25 feet minimum frontage (same); 0 feet minimum setback/front (starting 25 feet from the road centerline) (same); 10 feet minimum setback/side (increase); 0 feet minimum setback/side with signed agreement with neighboring property owner and provision of fire walls (same); 10 feet minimum setback/rear (decrease); 5 feet minimum setback/side and rear for accessory structure (same) and 35 feet height (same). 2/11/25

The Planning Commission members acknowledged that changing to a 5 feet setback (as was initially proposed) might be jarring especially if a homeowner has lived on a larger lot in that location for many years. However, the most pressing challenge for building in East Hardwick is installing a viable septic system. The sloping land and wetlands and water shed lands in the town add to the scarcity of adequate septic spaces. The Planning Commission is seeking to give as much flexibility as possible to potential homes and existing homes, while keeping the nature of the village.

The question of the front setback was provisionally answered and may be revisited at a future meeting. The Commission asked for a percentage of how many properties would become non-conforming if the front setback were altered to a higher number. The Zoning Administrator believes that nearly 30% would be in non-conformity, but will verify and return with further information for the Commission.

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:

N/A

Motion: N/A.

Updates from the Zoning Administrator:

N/A

Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.

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

The meeting ended at 8:05 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on Wednesday, March 12 on the 3rd Floor of the Memorial Building. This will be in conjunction with the Better Connections community meeting.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA