

Hardwick Planning Commission  
April 8, 2025  
Hybrid – In-Person and Zoom options  
Minutes

HPC Members Present: Dave Gross, Chair; Larry Fliegelman; Jim Lewis; Kole; and Bud Stevens (by Zoom)

HPC Members Absent: Ken Davis; Michael Haveson; and Gillian D’Acierno (Alternate)

Shari Cornish has officially resigned her seat on the Planning Commission. Kole has agreed to step into her seat. The Select Board will make a decision at their April 17, 2025 meeting.

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator; Tracy Martin, Community Development Coordinator (by Zoom); Liam Abbate, Transportation and GIS Planner for NVDA; and Cathlin Lord, Regional Planner for NVDA.

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:35 pm. Jim Lewis moved to approve the agenda as written. Larry Fliegelman seconded. All members were in favor. Bud Stevens moved to approve the February 11, 2025 meeting minutes as written. Larry Fliegelman seconded. All members were in favor.

**Presentation on Act 181 (reforming Act 250) by NVDA – our Regional Planning Commission**

The Regional Planning Commission – Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) – provided an initial overview of Act 181. The Act directs Regional Planning Commissions to draft Future Land Use Plan Maps for their Regions. NVDA has initiated the draft of the Hardwick map. Liam Abbate, Transportation and GIS Planner for NVDA, was on hand with Cathlin Lord, Regional Planner for NVDA, to present the draft.

The new Statute creates a set of Tiers for Act 250. Tier 1A and Tier 1B serve to loosen Act 250 requirements in the built areas of Vermont. In Hardwick, the downtown and surrounding areas and East Hardwick are the only locations that could fall into this category. The criteria for Tier 1A will be released this summer.

Most of the town will be in Tier 2. In the future, the criteria for Tier 3 will be released (January 1, 2026). Tier 3 will have a more restrictive Act 250 review. Tier 3 will not be identified by the Regional Future Land Use map created by NVDA.

The regional maps need to be complete by the end of 2025.

The Planning Commission will review the draft more thoroughly at their May meeting. The Hardwick Conservation Commission was invited to attend this meeting to provide assistance in the review.

**Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – Tracy Martin**

*Transportation Alternatives* – The Town has selected a contractor and the Select Board will review the proposal on April 17, 2025. Once there is an official motion, the work will begin and will involve the Planning Commission.

*Better Connections* – The draft report is in the final stages and will be presented to the Select Board on April 17, 2025.

*Tree planting grant* - Approximately 24-30 locations have been selected. The planting will occur throughout June.

***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
8. The proposed front setback was revisited and amended to 10 feet (from 0 feet – starting 25 feet from the road centerline). Kristen and Dave worked on a complete inventory of the area and found 11-14 properties would be non-conforming. If the 10 feet setback becomes an impediment for replacing wastewater systems, the dimension can be examined at a future time. The 10 feet setback matches a large percentage of the existing street scape. 4/8/25

### **New Zoning Bylaw Changes:**

The Zoning Administrator provided a list of possible adjustments for the next Zoning Bylaw update. The members who were present agreed with the following draft proposals:

1. Add “Contractor Yards” to the Conditional Use List of the Highway Mixed Use zoning district.
2. Add “Transfer Stations” to the Conditional Use List of the Highway Mixed Use zoning district.
3. Change Single Family Dwelling to Single Unit Dwelling throughout the Unified Development Bylaws.
4. Change Two Family Dwelling to Two Unit Dwelling throughout the Unified Development Bylaws.
5. Change Multi-Family Dwelling to Multi-Unit Dwelling throughout the Unified Development Bylaws.
6. Change the definition of “Dwelling Unit” to “means a single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.” Current definition references “family” – see language in 24 VSA 4412 (courtesy of Act 181).
7. Section 4.15 Protected Public Uses now needs to include “Hotels and motels converted to permanently affordable housing developments” in districts CB, VN, HMU, CR
8. The school section in 4.15 should say “Agency of Education” not “Vermont Department of Education.”

The Section 4.13 Mobile Home Park language also currently has a minimum of five acres. State statute requires that no bylaw shall have the effect of excluding mobile home parks, as defined in 10 VSA Chapter 153, from the municipality. The minimum area requirement will be reviewed at the May meeting. The Zoning administrator will seek outside assistance with possible language or approaches.

### **Short Term Rentals:**

N/A

***Motion: 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.***

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

The meeting ended at 8:08 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, May 13, 2025 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of the Memorial Building.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA