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

HPC Members Present: Dave Gross, Chair; Kole; Ken Davis; Larry Fliegelman; Jim Lewis; and Michael Haveson

HPC Members Absent: Bud Stevens and Gillian D'Acierno (Alternate)

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

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:30 pm. Ken Davis moved to approve the agenda as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. Kole moved to approve the draft May 13, 2025 minutes as written. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. Larry Fliegelman moved to approve the draft June 10, 2025 minutes as written. Ken Davis seconded. All members were in favor. Larry Fliegelman moved to approve the draft June 18, 2025 Flood Safety Meeting minutes as written. Kole seconded. All members were in favor.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – Tracy Martin

Transportation Alternatives – The Town has officially hired VHB to conduct the feasibility and scoping study for the Mill Street and Main Street area (the contract is now signed). VHB will generate a working base map of Mill Street and Main Street (to the crosswalk by the swinging bridge). After the base map is created, a local concerns meeting will occur to solicit input from the various stakeholders. The meeting was tentatively scheduled for Mid-August with a tour of the area prior to the meeting. Once the input has been received, the goal is to have several options for the community's consideration and chosen options will have cost estimates.

Better Connections – At their June 26, 2025 meeting, the Select Board approved the adoption of the 2025 Better Connections Plan as an addendum to the 2019 Hardwick Municipal Plan. The addendum will be dedicated to the memory of Meredith Holch. This grant is officially closed and moving into implementation stages.

Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) – These funds are loosely based on the damage from the July 2023 flooding event. Hardwick was not identified by HUD as a majorly damaged town but we were identified by the State of Vermont. We're not certain how much money will be available to the State identified towns (12 million?). Hardwick (at this time) intends to apply for a mitigation grant and a planning grant. The mitigation grant would focus on the HED property below the intersection of Cooper and the Lamoille. Flood storage and reconnecting the floodplain. The planning grant would focus on the phased design and engineering that is needed for downtown Hardwick (submitted as a BRIC grant before the program was deleted). Tracy will be seeking REDI support to pay Heather Carrington to submit the 2 applications.

Act 181

The Commission reviewed the newest version of the Future Land Use maps from Liam Abbate at NVDA . The map reflects the future land use for NVDA's regional plan. NVDA had also provided updated maps of East Hardwick and Downtown Hardwick. Tracy and Kristen provided another overview of the complex aspects of

Act 181. The act creates changes in the Act 250 planning process and shifts the five current designations to a 2 designation (Neighborhood and Center) approach.

At this time, Downtown Hardwick (the current designated downtown) will become a Step 3 Center – (Advanced Center). The Planned Growth Areas and the Village Areas will become "Neighborhoods." East Hardwick's Village Center will become a Step 2 Center (Intermediate Center) with Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas as the Neighborhood classification. The Step 3 Center and the Step 2 Center are dictated by the legacy map lines created by the current (but expiring) designation system. The Planned Growth Areas and the Village Areas are noted and created by NVDA on their Future Land Use maps.

Downtown Hardwick is eligible for Tier 1A status – which eliminates Act 250 permitting on all levels within the Tier 3 Center and associated Neighborhood (Application due to the LURB in January 2026). Downtown Hardwick and East Hardwick are also eligible for Tier 1B status – which eliminates Act 250 permitting for housing projects up to 50 units. The Future Land Use map must demonstrate the Tier 1B status for it to be accepted by the State of Vermont.

Application for Tier 1A would require Hardwick to adopt River Corridor bylaw rules. These draft rules will be reviewed at the August 2025 meeting. In addition, the Town would need to adopt regulations that address historical aspects. Tracy and Kristen will continue to review this component.

To retain the Step 3 Center designation, Hardwick will have additional components to create but the legacy acceptance into the new designation is in place until 2034. The Town will have ample time to adjust and improve our planning processes to retain the Advance Center verification.

The Planning Commission identified one area on the downtown Hardwick map that should not be mapped as a neighborhood due to its lack of access to town water and sewer and the wetlands within the area. Kristen will forward the requested changes to Liam at NVDA. Tracy and Kristen will provide the overview of Act 181 to the Select Board in August.

Hardwick Conservation Commission: The Conservation Commission is requesting support from the Hardwick Planning Commission for the possible purchase of the Davis property on Buffalo Mountain. Ken owns the parcel with his brother. There are 3 parcels in total with over 300 acres. The property has been lightly logged and has an extensive road system that is currently utilized by snowmobiles, walkers, and ATV users. The current taxes are $6,000 per year and that amount has become unsustainable for the Davis family. Northern Rivers Land Trust has approached the Davis family with the possibility of selling the property to the Town of Hardwick for an expanded Town Forest. The Conservation Commission has a memo from the Zoning Administrator about the support provided in the 2019 Hardwick Municipal Plan, the 2018 Town Recreation Plan, and the 2024 Hardwick Natural Inventory. The HCC would appreciate a letter of support from the HPC.

Motion: The Hardwick Planning Commission supports the pursuit of the acquisition of the Davis property on Buffalo Mountain by the Northern Rivers Land Trust.

Jim Lewis made the motion and Larry Fliegelman seconded. Ken Davis abstained as a direct participant in the proposal (owner). All remaining members approved.

New Zoning Bylaw Changes:

The Section 4.13 Mobile Home Park language 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 was reviewed at the June meeting. The Zoning Administrator reviewed the Mobile Home or Manufactured Home language from multiple Vermont towns. This appears to be an overlooked aspect of the integration with the HOME act. Montpelier has the least discriminatory approach but it is tailored to a larger and less rural community. The Planning Commission will continue to review possible approaches. A suggestion was made to remove the category of Mobile Home Park (or Manufactured Housing Park). The category cannot be removed as it would be interpreted as a prohibition of Mobile Home parks within the Town of Hardwick. The section continues to need to be updated but the HPC will wait until after the current selection of bylaw updates are completed.

River Corridor rules are in process and will be discussed at the August 12, 2025 meeting. A tentative date for the Bylaw update hearing will be set for September 9, 2025.

Short Term Rentals:
N/A

Motion: N/A

Updates from Commission Members:
N/A

Motion: N/A.

Updates from the Zoning Administrator:
Siler Consulting and SLR have provided new education pieces on Dams, Flood Mitigation, and Floodways, River Corridors etc. Kristen shared the information with the Commission.

Due to a medical leave in October, Kristen requested that the Planning Commission move their meeting to October 7 rather than October 14. The Commission agreed but did not adopt a formal motion.

Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.

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

The meeting ended at 7:50 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, August 12, 2025 on the 3rd Floor of the Memorial Building.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA