

Hardwick Planning Commission
September 9, 2025
Hybrid – In-Person and Zoom options
Minutes

HPC Members Present: Dave Gross, Chair; Kole; Bud Stevens; Michael Haveson; Jim Lewis; and Gillian D’Acierno (Alternate)

HPC Members Absent: Ken Davis and Larry Fliegelman (Gillian D’Acierno assumes his seat)

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

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:32 pm. Kole moved to approve the agenda with a small correction on the future HPC date. Jim Lewis seconded. All members were in favor. Jim Lewis moved to approve the draft August 12, 2025 minutes as written. Kole seconded. All members were in favor.

Updates from the Community Development Coordinator – Tracy Martin

Transportation Alternatives – VHB hosted a local concerns meeting on August 13 to solicit input from area stakeholders. The meeting is hybrid with a zoom option (No attendees) and an in-person option in the Parker Ladd Community Room at the Jeudevine Memorial Library (25 participants). The meeting had a good cross-section representation of the Hardwick community. Three options are being developed for the community’s consideration, and the chosen option will be developed with cost estimates.

Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) – Hardwick is applying for an implementation grant and a planning grant. The planning grant focuses on the phased design and engineering that is needed for downtown Hardwick. The implementation grant focuses on the floodplain restoration of the HED property below the intersection of Cooper and the Lamoille River. SLR is assisting with a budget estimate on this project. On September 18, there will be a Public Hearing hosted by the Select Board.

Act 181 – Certified Local Government - Application for Tier 1A would require Hardwick to adopt River Corridor bylaw rules (*in process*). In addition, the Town would need to adopt regulations that address historical aspects. The Select Board made a motion on August 7, 2025 to pursue Certified Local Government in Hardwick. CLG would allow the town to meet the requirements for Tier 1A application. The program provides access to money for preservation projects and educational projects in the municipality.

Local LVRT information - The Pause Park and the trailhead at the Depot will not be completed until October after the Historical Society lifts and repairs the existing train tracks. The East Hardwick trailhead has their wetlands delineation. They are outside of the wetland buffer with their development (both parking spaces and the pavilion). The location on Stevens Lane will eventually have a handicapped accessible parking space, a kiosk, a pavilion, bike repair rack, and a picnic table.

Municipal Energy Resilience Program – 3 Municipal buildings are included in this grant program. The largest component is the insulation piece. The first bid request received only 1 response; the second bid request

received no responses. NVDA has helped Tracy reach out to five firms with an Invitation to Bid. The program is also funding updates to lighting fixtures, heating and cooling elements.

Hardwick Downtown Partnership – The Partnership has posted the opening for an Administrative Coordinator on a part-time basis. The Tree planting grant is nearly complete with the trees arriving soon and signs being developed for each location.

New Zoning Bylaw Changes:

The Public Hearing will be re-scheduled (officially) to accommodate additional changes to the zoning bylaw update.

Motion: To schedule the Public Hearing to discuss the proposed Hardwick Unified Development Bylaw update on December 9, 2025, at 6:30 pm.

Bud Stevens made the motion and Kole seconded. All members were in favor.

The River Corridor Bylaw Review was received from the Floodplain Managers Team. The proposed update will meet the State standards and move Hardwick to the highest level of matching (17.5%) in disaster recovery funds under ERAF (Emergency Relief Assistance Fund). Alexis Nevins suggested adding River Corridors to the Exemption language (done).

Alison Low from NVDA provided recommendations on Tuesday, September 9, prior to the HPC meeting. She is glad to see that Hardwick is working on Private Family Cemeteries. She made a few suggestions that could be incorporated to improve Statutory integration. The Planning Commission has requested that an attorney review the language and the suggestions. We will start with the legal council at VLCT and then proceed to the Town Attorney (if necessary and permitted by the governing structures).

Alison had a recommendation for Section 1.3 that is derived from the Town of Brighton. And a reference improvement for the Transfer Station in Highway Mixed Use.

In the River Corridor Regulations, Alison recommended the inclusion of the warning of disclaimer (from Flood Plain Review). She also informed the Commission that they can exempt streams from smaller watershed sizes, and she inquired about the inclusion of Substantially Damaged structure language. After discussion, the consensus was that the exemption of smaller watershed stream was not recommended in Hardwick (the town has already lost one property next to a stream that would be exempt under that threshold). In addition, the Planning Commission is not currently recommending the use of Substantial Damage determination in the River Corridor areas. Kristen will communicate with Alexis Nevins to verify and provide further review of these NVDA recommendations.

A letter and FAQ will be sent to each landowner whose property is not in the mapped Floodplain and who will be impacted by the adoption of River Corridor rules.

Updates from Commission Members:

N/A

Motion: N/A.

Updates from the Zoning Administrator:

The Ripple Effects Watershed Forum has begun. The first session was about Dredging in Rivers. The conversation was filmed by HCTV and is available on their website and on the Town Website (under Flood Resources). A handout from The Nature Conservancy titled “Dredging Makes Floods More Dangerous” was included in HPC packets this month. The next sessions will be Beavers & Natural Infrastructures tomorrow night (9/10), Dam Removal & Rivers on September 24, and Climatology and the Future of Vermont’s Watersheds on October 1.

The Municipal Planning Grant is in process in the Granite Street Historic District. The initial meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 15, 2025, at 4:30 at Atkins Field. SLR will be conducting the study and will collect first-hand information from residents. The meeting is targeted at residents and owners in the neighborhood but is open to the public.

The State of Vermont is developing a Municipal Climate Action Toolkit for Planning Commissions and will be choosing towns to pilot the program. The toolkit will assist with Municipal Plan updates (2027 for Hardwick). Kristen will continue to have conversations with the consultant who is working on the toolkit and with our state partners. General support of the concept was provided by the HPC members. Further information will be made available prior to any commitments.

Motion: To conclude the Hardwick Planning Commission Meeting.

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

The meeting ended at 7:45 pm.

The next HPC meeting will be at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, on the 3rd Floor of the Memorial Building.

~ Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA