

**Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Planning Commission
Public Hearing on the
Hartford Town Plan Update
3/25/19**

Attendance: The following individuals attended the public hearing on the Hartford Town Plan which was held at the Hartford Town Hall on Monday, March 25, 2019.

Planning Commission Members: Toby Dayman, Jacques Harlow, Robin Adair Logan, Peter Merrill, Dave Sherman and chair Bruce Riddle.

Others: Lynn Bohi, Erik Krauss, Martha McDaniel and Cathy Melocik.

Staff: Lori Hirshfield, Department of Planning and Development Services Director, Geoff Martin, Energy Coordinator and Matt Osborn, Town Planner.

Chair Bruce Riddle opened the public hearing to order at 6:36 p.m.

Planner Matt Osborn gave an overview of a Town Plan:

- It looks at where we have been in the past, where we are today and where we want to be in 5-20 years.
- It serves as a road map for a community, what is important about the Town, and what to do to meet the community's needs going into the future.
- It is broken into chapters reflective of aspects of the community, with many of these topics required by State Statute. It includes historic resources, land use, population, housing, economic development, community facilities and services, utilities, transportation, natural resources, flood resilience, energy and relationship of Plan to development trends and plans for adjacent towns and region.
- The Plan is required to be updated every five years. Following this Plan adoption, the Plan will be required to be updated every eight years. It may be updated more frequently.
- The Plan was last updated in May, 2014.
- Following adoption by the Selectboard, the Plan must be approved by the Regional Planning Commission, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.

Department of Planning and Development Services Director Lori Hirshfield noted that staff has been working on the Town Plan update with the Town Plan Steering Committee since last April. The Steering Committee consists of the entire Planning Commission and representatives from Town boards and commissions as well as the Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce. Lori noted that the update objectives are:

- Meet new statutory requirements since last update.
 - Energy
 - Natural Resources (forest blocks and wildlife)
- Update other chapters as time allowed and information available.
- Make more user friendly, visually engaging, and consolidate format. Current draft primarily focusses on content with format continuing with subsequent drafts.
- Community wide discussions on Town goals, needs, future direction, and how to get there - began with Community forums. Five community forums were held last summer.
- The Community Forums provided a wealth of information and public input. In many instances these are reflective of current activities and aspirations. In other instances, new directions and approaches are suggested. Lori noted that we recognize the community forums

were the beginning of a process to further explore these new ideas within the Hartford community, and would take more time than available for the current update of the Town Plan. A summary of the outcomes of the community forums is included in this update as an appendix to recognize their importance and the commitment to further discussion.

Matt Osborn provided a chapter by chapter review of the proposed changes.

Introduction: Updated, added sections on Hartford's geography, Hartford's assets, guiding principles and town planning goals.

Chapter 1, Historic Resources: Updated, some minor reorganization, shortened chapter, added sections on threats to historic resources, cemeteries, a history timeline and developed goals, strategies and actions. Matt also noted that since the February 22nd Draft Plan, goals were moved from the front of the chapter to the rear with the strategies and actions. He noted that there is a duplicate paragraph on page 1 that should be removed.

Chapter 2 Land Use: A major update was completed in 2014. Updated information on recent housing and non-housing development from 2013-2018 with narratives, eliminated section on the 2003 build-out analysis and converted recommendations to goals, strategies and actions.

Chapter 3 Population: Minor updating, shortened chapter, reduced the number of tables, updated population projections, added a section on race and developed goals, strategies and actions.

Chapter 4 Housing and Chapter 5 Economic Development: No changes. Work started on these chapters, but it was recognized that more time was needed to do a thorough job.

Chapter 6 Community Facilities and Services: Basic updating, added Capital Improvements Program information and converted recommendations to goals, strategies and actions. Since the February 22nd Draft Plan, Police and Fire Department goals were moved to the rear of the chapter with the other goals, strategies and actions. The cemetery section and the goals, strategies and actions were updated (copies provided). Staff is working on revisions to the solid waste section and will be sent out to the Planning Commission later this week. In addition, in an informal review of the Draft Plan, the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission requested expanding the section on vocational training opportunities.

Chapter 7 Utilities: Basic updating, added results from the community forums and converted recommendations to goals, strategies and actions.

Chapter 8 Transportation: Basic updating, added results from the community forums and converted recommendations to goals, strategies and actions.

Chapter 9 Natural Resources: Updated and shortened chapter, added section on forest blocks and critical wildlife habitat required by Statute and converted recommendations to goals, strategies and actions. Also, an informal review of the Draft Plan, the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission requested expanding the section on earth resources and agriculture and forest products. The earth resources revisions have been completed (copies provided). Staff is working on revisions to the agriculture and forest products. The changes will be e-mailed to the Planning Commission prior to the 4/1 public hearing.

Chapter 10 Energy: Energy Coordinator Geoff Martin reported that the Energy Chapter was a major overhaul of the previous Energy Chapter. The Chapter is separated into three sections

(transportation, building integrity, and renewable energy) to better align with the State's and Regional Commission's Comprehensive Energy Plans. The focus is on pursuing greater energy conservation, efficiency, and use of renewable energy for municipal operations, residents, and businesses; public education; and providing greater access to financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. Specific recommendations include stricter standards to achieve net-zero new construction by 2030; increased use of the State's ridesharing program; increased funding for public transportation; and siting criteria for commercial renewable energy facilities.

Chapter 11 Relationship of Plan to Development Trends and Plans for Adjacent Towns and Region: Matt Osborn reported that this chapter had minor updating.

Flood Resilience Element: Flood Resilience is a required element for a Town Plan in Vermont. A Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) may be adopted by reference in place of a flood resilience element. In 2014, Hartford adopted an updated HMP. The HMP will expire on 6/24/19. The Town seeks to incorporate sections of the HM Plan and will provide those sections at the 4/1/19 Planning Commission Public Hearing.

Town Plan Adoption Schedule: Matt Osborn noted that the Planning Commission will hold a second public hearing on Monday, April 1st at 5:30 PM, and decide if the Plan will be forwarded to the Selectboard for consideration. The Selectboard will hold two public hearings on May 7th & May 21st and consider adoption. If adopted, the Town Plan must be approved by the Regional Planning Commission (Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission)

This fall, work will commence on the next Town Plan update.

Public Comments: Chair Bruce Riddle opened the hearing to questions and comments.

Jacques Harlow asked about renewable energy. Geoff Martin responded that the focus of the Hartford Energy Commission has been on solar energy. There is an existing large hydroelectric facility on the Connecticut River in Wilder and two smaller facilities on the Ottawaquechee River in Quechee. Based on a regional evaluation on wind power, Hartford does not have the conditions necessary for efficient wind power.

Peter Merrill asked about biomass as an alternative energy. Geoff Martin responded that there is a great deal of energy loss with biomass with current technologies, but may change in the future.

Eric Krauss stated that the Energy Commission delved into the question how much sustainable energy can the region support. He noted that they did not come up with an answer in the Energy Chapter.

Jacques Harlow asked about locations for solar energy. Geoff Martin responded that the priority of the Energy Commission is to locate solar panels on roof tops of residential and commercial properties. They typically avoid identifying specific parcels. Geoff noted that in the past few years, the focus has been on building insulation. He did note that the Energy Chapter identifies an action of developing a revolving loan fund for energy improvements. Robin Adair Logan noted that in the building industry, there are a lot of technical innovations. It is an exciting time.

Cathy Melocik asked what the deadline is for comments on the Draft Plan. Lori Hirshfield responded that it would be helpful to have the comments to staff for the April 1, 2019 Planning Commission public hearing.

Cathy Melocik asked if Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) approval of the Town Plan is likely. Lori Hirshfield responded that staff has had close communications with the TRORC throughout the update process, including review and input at various stages.

Cathy Melocik asked if there is a way of ensuring that the monetary benefits from solar facilities sited on Town property go to Hartford tax payers. Geoff Martin responded that as long as the solar facility is on Town property, the Town could require that all benefits be available to Hartford residents. One of the recommendations in the Energy Chapter is for the Town to host solar arrays on Town property, and make the net-metering credits available to Hartford residents, particularly income-qualified residents. If the facility is on private property and privately developed, however, the Town would not have a say in who can participate in the benefits of the array.

Peter Merrill made a motion to continue the public hearing to Monday, April 1st at 5:30 p.m. The motion was seconded by Jacques Harlow and approved by a 6 to 0 vote.

Peter Merrill made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Robin Adair Logan and approved by a 6 to 0 vote. The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.