

Hartford Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee Meeting
5/14/18
Draft Minutes

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall in Room 312 at 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction on Monday, May 14, 2018. The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m. Introductions were made.

Bruce Riddle	Planning Commission
Robin Adair Logan	Planning Commission
Peter Merrill	Planning Commission
Dave Sherman	Planning Commission
Chris Lowe	Zoning Board of Adjustment
Martha McDaniel	Energy Commission
P.J. Skehan	Chamber of Commerce
Lori Hirshfield	Director of the Department of Planning and Development Services
Matt Osborn	Planner

Draft Minutes of the April 30, 2018 Meeting: Matt Osborn asked if there are any corrections to the Minutes of April 30, 2018. There were no corrections and the minutes were accepted as written.

Public Input for the Town Plan: Lori Hirshfield reported that she spoke with the Town Manager and he is supportive of the concept to engage a consultant to help with the community engagement process for the Town Plan update. She continues to work with consultants Rebecca Sanborn Stone and Delia Clark on the details and cost estimate the four community meetings for the general Town Plan update in addition to those already under contract for the energy planning process. She stated that the five community meetings will likely take place in June. The next step is to select dates and venues for the meetings. The Steering Committee agreed to start the meetings at 6:00 or 6:30 p.m. The meetings are planned for 1.5 to 2 hours. Lori noted that the first meeting will be Planning 101. She noted that staff and the Steering Committee will be working with the consultants on the layout of the meetings. Steering Committee members then offered input on the approach for the first meeting.

Martha McDaniel suggested engaging people in a conversation of what are those things that are most important in our Town. These could include economic opportunity, housing, personal safety, quality of life and overall atmosphere in town. She noted the format of the Brattleboro and Montpelier plans, and suggested including the responses to what is important to our Town at the beginning of the Plan. Chris Lowe suggested providing the public with a link to the existing Town Plan prior to the meetings so they can review it before the meeting. He also noted that there needs to be an explanation of what the Town Plan is and the process. Lori Hirshfield added that she will mention that this is a relatively minor update and that we need to manage expectations. There also was discussion about other opportunities for people to provide input (not a new survey) other than through the meetings. Staff will work with the Town IT person to explore website and Facebook options. Lori also noted that she will keep the Steering Committee members apprised of the planning meeting with the consultants if some want to attend. All agreed with the suggestions.

Peter Merrill stated that he is interested in how our plan relates to the Regional Plan. Lori Hirshfield responded that Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) is currently updating the Regional Plan. She also noted that staff is working closely with Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission on our update. Bruce Riddle added that the TRORC Board is much more engaging than previous boards and they ask a lot more questions of staff.

Historic Resources Chapter: Matt Osborn provided background information on the Hartford Historic Preservation Commission and Certified Local Government (CLG) Program. Hartford is one of fourteen CLG's in Vermont that have demonstrated a commitment to historic preservation and are eligible for annual historic preservation grants. Since 1993, Hartford has received approximately \$160,000 in grants that have been used for historic district nominations, historic sites and structures surveys, barn inventory, historic district brochures and oral history projects. The current CLG project is a public outreach and education project. The upcoming CLG project is cemetery research and oral history. Matt distributed a copy of a map of the nine historic districts in Hartford.

Matt Osborn reported that the Historic Preservation Commission established a working group to review the historic resources chapter and make recommendations. He noted that the HHPC working group thinks the chapter can be reduced in length and be more engaging. Bruce Riddle cautioned about eliminating too much information. He stated that we need enough information to engage people. Martha McDaniel commented she believes it is possible to articulate that Hartford values its historic resources with condensed text, maps, and photos, and putting the detailed data in an appendix which is linked to the document,

Matt Osborn provided the Middlebury, Vermont Historic Resources Chapter as being a good example. The Steering Committee reviewed the chapter and agreed. Matt suggested providing a map of the 1869 Beers Atlas and photographs of historic buildings. Matt noted that he also liked the Middlebury Historical Highlights. Bruce Riddle suggested adding dates of the civil, world wars and other major events to provide context. Robin Adair Logan suggested adding the date Vermont became the 14th state.

Peter Merrill suggested the consideration of including early black or other racial and ethnic residential areas in Hartford.

Matt Osborn noted that one of the most important issues for the HHPC is the loss of historic buildings. He added that there isn't an easy solution.

Robin Adair Logan stated that she would like to see website links to the appendix in the text and in a different color so that it stands out.

Housing Chapter: Matt Osborn began the review of the housing chapter. He noted that it is a long chapter and has a great deal of valuable data and information, but he thinks it can be significantly reduced in size.

Martha McDaniel asked what is the purpose of the housing chapter? Bruce Riddle responded that it is to ensure a variety of housing types which are safe and affordable. He noted that one of the challenges is the availability of housing data. Lori Hirshfield suggested contacting the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. P.J. Skehan noted that housing is a major issue related to economic development.

Peter Merrill noted the high number of seasonal housing units in Quechee that needs to be highlighted. Matt Osborn agreed, but noted Hartford's seasonal housing is below 20% and is slightly lower than Windsor County and slightly higher than the State of Vermont.

Bruce Riddle thinks we need to identify where housing can be built. Lori Hirshfield responded that this and other issues are a bigger discussion than we can provide for with this update. She suggested including these as recommendations in the Plan for future studies.

Chris Lowe suggested the need for housing goals and objectives.

Peter Merrill noted the high cost of housing in Vermont and the northeast. Robin Adair Logan noted that the high cost of land and materials are the primary reasons. She added that major energy innovations are coming in the next few years which will help with the cost of maintaining a home.

David Sherman stated that the housing chapter is hard to read and there are tables that are very similar to other tables and can be eliminated. There was consensus that there is too much information in the chapter and it needs to be reduced in size.

Lori Hirshfield stated that with this guidance from the Steering Committee members, staff will start working on revisions to the housing chapter. Martha McDaniel suggested staff provide the Steering Committee an outline of the chapter purpose before deciding on content. All agreed.

Next Meeting: Lori Hirshfield noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 11th and with the scheduling of the community meetings, the meeting date could change. The next chapters for the Steering Committee to review will be utilities and community facilities and services.

Energy Chapter Update: Martha McDaniel reported that the Energy Commission is currently working on the Energy Chapter. She stated that the focus will be on transportation (alternatives to single occupant vehicles), renewable energy and land use.

Appointment of Matt Osborn as Acting Zoning Administrator: Lori Hirshfield noted that Matt Osborn's term as Acting Zoning Administrator is up. She asked the Planning Commission members if they will nominate him for another term. Peter Merrill made a motion to nominate Matt Osborn as the Acting Zoning Administrator. The motion was seconded by Bruce Riddle and approved by a 4 to 0 vote.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.