

# **TOWN OF WOODBURY PLANNING COMMISSION**

## **November 15, 2021, Meeting Minutes**

**Planning Commission Members Present:** Michael Sadler; Thomas “Skip” Lindsay-Chair; Jim Schweithelm, Ph.D. Vice-Chair; Dave Barnowski; Michael Gray; Jayne Nold-Laurendeau

**Members of the Public Present:** Clare Rock-Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC); Diana Peduzzi, Stephen Murphy, Elizabeth Higgins, Dennis Baril, Tim Appleton, Monty Shatney, Karli Brown, Justin Brown

The meeting was held for public review of and comment on the proposed Woodbury Town Plan under V.S.A. Title 24, Chapter 117 § 4444.

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 P.M.

### **Public Review and Comment on the Draft Town Plan:**

Skip began the meeting with a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the 2020 Woodbury Town Plan’s contents including:

- Process of Developing the Plan
- Vision for the Future
- Purpose and Benefits of the Plan

These sections of the Plan were described in the presentation:

- Natural Setting
- Sense of Community
- Rural Infrastructure
- Mapping out the Future
  - Future Land Use
  - Implementation Program
- Appendix-Woodbury Enhanced Energy Plan

Here’s the hyperlink to the presentation on the Town’s website:

<https://www.woodburyvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/11.15.21-Town-Plan-Presentation.pptx>

The commissioners responded to questions from the members of the public throughout the presentation including:

- J & K Brown questioned the total number of respondents to the three surveys.
  - Skip responded the stated number is correct.

- Monty Shatney questioned whether Michael Gray will recuse himself from voting as a Select Board member on approving the Town Plan.
  - Michael responded he will recuse himself from voting.
- J & K Brown expressed their concern regarding the lack of police protection in town and the long response time from the police.
  - Michael Gray acknowledged the issue and noted the Town had talks with the Hardwick PD in hopes of contracting them for policing services. The talks were put on hold due to staffing issues at the Hardwick PD.
  - Skip directed the meeting participants to the Town Plan, municipal and Regional Facilities and Services Goal section. Objective “H”-Continue to provide public safety and emergency services; Action Item xii, calls for providing police protection on a contractual basis.
- Stephen Murphy suggested the Town could allocate lands for a fuel lot/biomass/timber facility to create a local source for these products.
- Tim Appleton urged the commissioners to use the correct title(s) in the list of acronyms.
- Lizzy Higgins suggested the Town work with the State to develop access to Buck Lake for Woodbury citizens
- Lizzy Higgins noted the fear of over-regulation is worse than a developer coming in to develop commercial wind or solar electric generation sites.
- Other discussion topics included
  - Broadband installation
  - The need for sidewalks in Woodbury Village
  - Bike lanes on Vermont Route 14
  - Why would Woodbury want to invest in the village center if people are leaving the State?

### **Review Draft Town Plan Public Comments/Edits:**

The meeting then proceeded to a review of the comments from public meetings held on August 28, September 1, and October 18.

Comments from Stephen Murphy regarding asserting community standards relative to development regulation to ensure these standards are legally enforceable were discussed. Jim S. led the debate noting while the Plan itself is not legally enforceable at the Town level, however, it does have legal implications in terms of expressing the will of the community in Act 250 proceedings. The discussion included options such as producing another town-wide survey focused on Stephen’s comments, thus delaying the project, revising the Plan to include language developed by the CVRPC, amending the Plan at a future date based on the public input of Stephen’s comments. The Commissioners determined the best course of action would be in the near term to use

language developed by the CVRPC that addresses Stephen's concerns and amend the Plan in the future based upon additional contributions by Woodbury citizens.

Comments by Norm Etkind centered on the Energy Plan component of the Town Plan. Note that the general premise of the Woodbury Energy Plan is based on the idea that the generation of energy will be achieved using more renewable sources and fewer fossil fuel-based resources.

Specifically, the "Thermal Sector Conversions per Target Year table caused the most concern. The Commissioners acknowledged that there are obvious shortcomings associated with the local data based upon the top-down method of disaggregating regional data to the municipal level and that the targets established should be used to show the general direction in which change needs to occur. However, the total target number for new heat pumps far exceeds what the Planning Commission considers to be realistic or feasible, or desirable based upon local conditions. As only 140 homes currently heat with fossil fuels, a target of 353 new heat pumps appears a considerable stretch. This would require existing wood systems to convert to this technology. Skip led this discussion citing Vermont's 2016 Comprehensive Energy Plan's acknowledgment that "expanding the use of advance wood heat is a strategy that makes measurable progress towards the goals of the 2016 Comprehensive Energy Plan." The CVRPC and Commissioners developed language-specific to Woodbury's contribution to the regional energy goals away from fossil fuel usage. Ensuring existing wood systems are retained and upgraded to newer efficient systems as well as adding more wood systems would be more realistic and feasible goals.

Comments and historical Zoning information submitted by Diana Peduzzi were discussed. Certain portions of Diana's comments will be included in the Plan.

Michael Sadler volunteered to develop a formal document, under the Town's letterhead, that will capture comments from public meetings held on August 28, September 1, October 18, and November 15.

### **Project Timeline Update:**

The Commissioners and CVRPC discussed the next steps in the project timeline and Plan development. Skip noted that specific guidance for Town Plan approval, timing, and procedures may be found in 24 VSA § 4384 (f) and 24 VSA § 4385 (a)(b).

24 VSA § 4384 (f): Once the final draft Plan is completed the Commissioners will hold a special meeting and vote to adopt the Plan as written or not. Once the Plan is adopted, the Planning Commission will submit the Plan to the Select Board and Town Clerk.

24 VSA § 4385 (a)(b): The Select Board holds a public meeting not less than 30 days nor more than 120 days after receipt of the Plan.

Skip offered to produce a document for the Select Board detailing their approval processes and statutory guidelines.

Subject to the approval of the Plan, it is then sent to the Regional Planning Commission and Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development.

**Discussion-Woodbury Mountain Wilderness Preserve:**

The Commissioners discussed the merits of the proposed Woodbury Mountain Wilderness Preserve. Subsequently, Jim S introduced a motion/resolution in support of the Woodbury Mountain Wilderness Preserve project. The resolution passed with four members in support, one against and one abstaining. Skip will produce a letter of support from the Planning Commission for review by the Commissioners and subsequent publication.

At 9:45 PM Skip introduced a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.