

Hardwick Planning Commission
May 22, 2017
Hardwick Memorial Building
Minutes

HPC Members Present: Chair Dave Gross, Ken Davis, Joyce Mandeville, Diane Grenkow, Shawn Ainsworth, and Jim Lewis

HPC members Absent: None.

Also Present: Kristen Leahy, Hardwick Zoning Administrator (ZA) and Alison Low, Planner for Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA).

Chair Dave Gross opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

Agenda was approved as published.

The Municipal Planning Grant cycle is complete. The remaining section relates to “fragmentation of working lands.” Alison made a presentation to the Commission regarding the recently adopted Working Land overlay in Sutton, Vermont.

The goal of this zoning approach is to prioritize working lands on which to preserve capacity for large acreage agricultural ventures and forestry operations.

Valuable Working Lands are defined as

- large acreage allowing for economic operations (large unbroken coverage – more than 25 acres) (National Land Cover dataset)
- highly productive soils (Natural Resources Conservation service)
- lands already designated for long-term productions (VT Land trust conservation easement or USDA Farm Service Agency conservation easement)
- lands abutting tracts with some form of existing designation or protection

Valuable Forest Lands are defined as

- unbroken forested coverage (25+ acres)
- highly productive forest soils
- lands enrolled in or abutting Current Use Program (VT Agency of Natural Resources)
- lands abutting lands in long –term productions (Conservation easements, Publicly conserved lands)

This approach provides an alternative to traditional zoning. The landowner can create open space adjacent to open space on other lands, maintain road access to open spaces (for forestry or farming), and can design shared driveways and accesses.

No maximum lot size is dictated but the original lot cannot be rendered ineligible for current use. No deed restrictions are utilized – the densities are recorded on the zoning permit.

Clustering is

- made feasible by eliminating minimum lot size
- flexibility in site design
- reduce road frontage

- preserve lands from fragmentation by development and new road accesses
- may assign density bonuses (up to 50% for 80% of open space in working lands district, 60% for everywhere else)
- can lead to cluster sprawl if the open space is not connected to open spaces in adjacent parcels.

Planning Commission members were interested in the concept but the general consensus was that this would be a multi-year project. Perhaps this could be planned/discussed in conjunction with the upcoming Municipal Plan update.

No action was taken by the Hardwick Planning Commission regarding the proposed Vermont Land Trust conservation easement in East Hardwick.

Planning Commission members were provided with information about the upcoming Planning and Zoning Forum. Three members – Dave, Ken, and Jim – are interested in attending. Kristen will review the available funds in the zoning department budget and correspond with these commission members about the forum.

Shawn Ainsworth moved to approve the March 28, 2017 minutes for the Planning Commission meeting as written, Ken Davis seconded. All members were in favor. Shawn Ainsworth moved to approve the April 11, 2017 minutes of the Public Meeting with Dave Gross' proposed changes. Joyce Mandeville seconded. All members were in favor.

The Commission will begin work on the next Town Plan (due on July 1, 2019) this summer. Paper copies of the Municipal Plan – State Planning Manual will be made available to each Commission member.

The motion to adjourn was made by Diane Grenkow and seconded by Joyce Mandeville. All were in favor. Board adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Kristen Leahy, ZA