



**Town of Whitingham**

**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, December 14, 2021, 7:06 p.m.**

*These Minutes will be accepted into the public record (with any corrections noted) at a future meeting of the Whitingham Planning Commission.*

**Attending**

**PC**

Keith Thompson  
Peter Barus  
Brad Lackey

**ZA**

Gig Zboray

**Public**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

**Additions or Changes to Agenda** (none)

**Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)** (none)

**Review and approve prior meeting Minutes**

Mr. Thompson moved to approve the minutes for December 14, 2021. Second by Mr. Barus. All in favor.

**Continue review of recommendations in the Town Plan**

The Commission reviewed listed policies and recommendations in the Town Plan with a view toward focusing on those items that would be actionable within current resource constraints.

**Policy 5:** Encourage the development of sidewalks, crosswalks, parking and traffic calming solutions in the Jacksonville and Whitingham Villages.

**Recommendation 5.1:** Work to add sidewalks, crosswalks, parking and traffic calming treatments in the Villages of Whitingham and Jacksonville. (Planning Commission and Selectboard)

There was discussion; it was noted that the sidewalks were owned by Jacksonville Electric Co.; that the state will not allow crosswalks where needed because of limited sight distance; that parking in Jacksonville Village had been addressed with signage, etc.; that communication with WRC regarding sidewalks might yield possibilities.

**Policy 1:** Carefully review all development proposals to ensure minimal negative impacts on Whitingham's natural resources.

**Recommendation 1.1:** Continue to review existing zoning bylaws and make changes as necessary to ensure techniques are in place to minimize negative impacts on the town's natural resources (Planning Commission).

There was discussion; revisit in 2027.

**Policy 3:** Maintain undisturbed buffers of native vegetation along streambanks and shorelands.

**Recommendation 3.1:** Review and develop land use and development controls to ensure that development along stream banks and shorelines is controlled to prevent point and non-point pollution, minimize adverse aesthetic impacts, and to protect riparian habitats. (Planning Commission)

There was discussion of buffer zones.

**Policy 4:** Foster the protection and restoration of river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

**Recommendation 4.1:** The town should be familiar with up-to-date ANR river corridor maps that delineate the land areas adjacent to streams and rivers that are required to accommodate a stable channel. (Selectboard, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Zoning Administrator)

There was discussion; limited access to necessary resources.

**Policy 6:** Avoid new development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.

**Recommendation 6.1:** The town should regulate any new development in identified flood hazard areas, fluvial erosion hazard areas, and/or river corridors to ensure that development does not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion and extend these provisions to development activities that might increase the amount and/or rate of runoff and soil erosion from upland areas. (Selectboard, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Zoning Administrator)

There was discussion; it was noted that flood hazard regulations had been updated in 2021.

**Policy 7:** Encourage the protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

**Recommendation 7.1:** The town should update the Flood Hazard Area Regulations to include regulation of river corridors and include provisions for advance notification of and specific limits on new development activities in identified flood hazard areas, fluvial

erosion areas, river corridors and/or upland forested areas based on regulatory templates developed by the ANR Department of Environmental Conservation Rivers Program. (Selectboard, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Zoning Administrator)

There was discussion; it was noted that during update of zoning regulations, the Selectboard did not act to regulate river corridors.

**Policy 8:** Encourage flood emergency preparedness and response planning. 46

**Recommendation 8.1:** The town should pursue a flood resilience management approach whose essential components are to identify and map flood hazard areas, fluvial erosion hazard areas, and river corridor protection areas based on stream geomorphic assessment studies and maps provided by the Vermont ANR Rivers Program and designate those areas for protection to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and private property. (Selectboard, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Zoning Administrator)

There was discussion; it was noted that a flood hazard mitigation project was ongoing at the municipal center culverts.

**Policy 9:** Protect ground water resources throughout town.

**Recommendation 9.1:** Working with the Vermont Geological Survey and the Windham Regional Commission, map locations of aquifers and the land surface area needed to protect groundwater in Whitingham (Planning Commission).

There was discussion; to date there had been no guidance from WRC on aquifer mapping.

**Recommendation 9.2:** Once groundwater resources are mapped, develop specific techniques to protect groundwater in Whitingham (Planning Commission).

There was discussion; recently updated zoning regulations; see above.

**Policy 10:** Protect mineral resources, when identified, and regulate their removal.

**Recommendation 10.1:** Review and update, where necessary, standards regulating the extraction of mineral resources, impacts on adjacent uses, and the reclamation of the site. (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; it was noted that the state regulates mining.

**Policy 11:** Protect Whitingham's wildlife habitat and discourage the fragmentation of large forest blocks areas.

**Recommendation 11.1** The town should consider the feasibility of protecting designated Critical Corridor Areas to maintain a network of connected habitat areas that includes undeveloped lands, conserved lands, and lands under long-term stewardship. (Planning Commission and Selectboard)

There was discussion; it was noted that while there are no specific zoning rules pertaining to habitats/corridors, maps in the Town Plan are part of the permitting process; consider formalizing in 2027.

**Policy 1:** Provide for effective land development opportunities while allowing for innovative land solutions in the Zoning Regulation.

**Recommendation 1.1:** Review the existing Whitingham Zoning Regulation and propose amendments to: (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; it was noted that zoning regulations had just been very fully revised and approved in 2021.

**Policy 2:** Continue to use conservation areas for multiple resource use.

**Recommendation 2.1:** Propose zoning amendments that outline appropriate uses and development review standards for these conservation areas. (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; it was suggested that conservation districts and maps be reviewed and updated every two years.

**Policy 3:** Maintain and encourage agriculture, forestry, and open space and recreational uses in rural lands.

**Recommendation 3.1:** Investigate uses of regulatory and non-regulatory tools to protect working lands (Planning Commission)

**Recommendation 3.2:** Explore and utilize various farms and forestland protection strategies. (Planning Commission)

**Recommendation 3.3:** Explore using clustering of buildings and structures as a design tool to provide an appropriate means for conserving open space and natural resources. (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; it was noted that these issues had been addressed early in the project to update the Town Plan.

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**Policy 4:** Encourage both infill development and appropriate reuse of vacant or underused existing structures in the Villages. Allow new development, alterations or reconstruction only if it enhances the village setting and is compatible with in-village residences and is planned with regard to available services and facilities.

**Recommendation 4.1:** Review village zoning district boundaries and the capability of lands and facilities within and adjacent to the villages to determine if boundaries could be expanded. (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; there was little or no boundary expansion possible.

**Policy 5:** Continue to support the traditional role of the Jacksonville and Whitingham Villages as a focus of town economic, cultural and social activities and to provide for mixed residential and commercial/small industrial uses. Of critical importance is the preservation of the historic character of the villages.

**Recommendation 5.1:** Facilitate landowner access and understanding of State, Federal, and non-governmental incentive programs for structure rehabilitation and historic preservation. (Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator)

**Recommendation 5.3:** Create a walkable community by working toward safe and convenient pedestrian access to all portions of the villages. (Planning Commission and Selectboard)

**Recommendation 5.4:** Maintain and renew Village Center designations for Whitingham and Jacksonville. (Planning Commission and Selectboard)

There was discussion; actions were ongoing, and the ZA had been following through.

**Policy 6:** Restrict strip development and minimize its negative impacts.

**Recommendation 6.1:** Utilize techniques such as shared access points, increased landscaping, sign control, and emphasis on pedestrian movement. (Planning Commission and Selectboard)

There was discussion; n/a.

**Policy 1:** Plan for a diversity of housing types and coordinate it with the adequate provision for public utilities, facilities, and services.

**Recommendation 1.1:** Inform homeowners about the change to state law that encourages development of accessory apartments and increase the allowable size of such (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; ongoing, except for informing homeowners (for the revised list, **next agenda**).

**Recommendation 1.2:** Work with the Windham Regional Commission on the housing needs assessment for the region. (Planning Commission)

**Recommendation 1.3:** Investigate whether any public land or buildings could be used for the development of affordable housing. (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; n/a.

**Policy 2:** Promote the creation and preservation of housing that is and will continue to be affordable for all socioeconomic groups within the community.

**Recommendation 2.1:** Increase the number of affordable housing units while providing information and recommendations on local housing needs. (Planning Commission and Selectboard)

**Recommendation 2.2:** Continue the town's participation, with the towns of Marlboro and Halifax, on the Housing Rehabilitation Committee. (Housing Rehabilitation Committee)

**Recommendation 2.3:** Investigate working with the Southeast Vermont Housing Rehabilitation Loan Fund to expand housing rehabilitation options for Whitingham's residents. (Housing Rehabilitation Committee)

**Recommendation 2.4:** Support the use of public resources (such as the Vermont Community Development Program and locally-based Housing Rehabilitation Committee) to provide financing to lower income residents to maintain their housing. (Planning Commission and Selectboard)

**Recommendation 2.5:** Employ the services of existing non-profit organizations (such as the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust) for the administration of affordable housing. If there is local initiative and interest, establish a local community land trust. (Selectboard)

There was discussion; it was noted that resources were inadequate to support these recommendations.

**Policy 4:** Support the housing needs of special populations such as the elderly, low income, and residents with disabilities.

**Recommendation 4.1:** Assess the need for special population housing and establish future planning criteria based on results. (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; inadequate resources.

**Policy 3:** Support tourism that draws on the character of Whitingham itself: its beauty, culture, history, wildlife and outdoor recreation.

**Recommendation 3.1:** Expand and promote the existing trail system.

There was discussion; of Catamount Trail (passes through Whitingham); of Atherton Meadows; the “Green Mountain Giant”; the possibility of combining these on maps or websites; grants from the state, interest groups.

**Policy 4:** Assist local businesses by providing economic development information, permit guidance, and community facilities and services improvements when appropriate.

**Recommendation 4.1:** Review and update zoning regulation and other town ordinances and propose improvements, where applicable, to provide greater economic development opportunities and appropriate development review standards. (Planning Commission)

**Recommendation 4.2:** Work with the Vermont Downtown Program to help promote our designated Village Centers. Promote and take advantage of resources available through this program (Planning Commission and Economic Development Group).

There was discussion; resource issue.

**Policy 1:** Maintain land use patterns that will conserve energy.

**Recommendation 1.1** Review existing regulations and make changes as necessary to ensure techniques are in place to enhance energy conservation. (Planning Commission).

**Recommendation 1.2** Encourage developers to construct new buildings, if possible, in locations that are sheltered from the wind and are oriented to the south. (Planning Commission)

There was discussion; terminological inexactitude was noted; incomprehensible recommendations.

**Policy 2:** Promote the use of alternative forms of energy that respect the built and natural environment.

**Recommendation 2.1** Promote the use of wood as a space heating fuel source and for small scale industrial fuel uses as long as it meets all applicable emission standards. (Town Energy Coordinator, when appointed)

**Recommendation 2.2** Evaluate, and as appropriate, propose amendments to the Zoning Regulation to regulate the siting of systems that make use of renewable energy, such as solar panels and wind energy systems. (Planning Commission)

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There was discussion; n/a since previous zoning revision.

**For next agenda:** the clerk will cull the above list for possibly actionable items.

**Other business** (none)

**Adjourn**

Mr. Barus moved to Adjourn. Second by Mr. Thompson. All in favor.

The meeting was Adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Clerk, January 11, 2022