

**Hartford Planning Commission Workshop**  
**10/17/16**  
**Draft Minutes**

**Attendance:** The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall in Meeting Room at 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction on Monday, October 17, 2016.

**Planning Commission Members:** Toby Dayman, Jacques Harlow, Robin Adair Logan, John Reid, and chair Bruce Riddle.

**Staff:** Planning and Development Services Director Lori Hirshfield and Town Planner Matt Osborn.

**Others:** Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission Senior Planner Chris Sargent.

Bruce Riddle called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. Introductions were made. Bruce distributed an outline for discussion dated August 29, 2016.

**Update of the Regional Plan Land Use Chapter:** Chris Sargent noted that the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) has been doing rolling updates of the Regional Plan. Currently, TRORC staff are working updates to the land use and energy chapters as well as a new chapter on health. He noted that it is taking more time to complete the energy chapter given the standards of Act 248 have not been completed. Chris stated that TRORC is currently looking at rural lands and conservation areas as well as forest fragmentation. Lori Hirshfield responded that Hartford has worked on these issues as well. Chris stated that the land use chapter is dated and needs new life. Chris expects a draft of the land use chapter to be completed in January, public hearings in March and April and consideration of adoption at the June TRORC Annual Meeting.

Chris noted that with regard to the Regional Center/Growth Center, the only change they are planning to make is to bring the mapped Regional Center area into synch with the Growth Center boundary since the Growth Center boundary was adopted after TRORC modified the land use plan.

TRORC is looking at interchanges as well for consistency with State Statute. Chris noted that this meeting is intended to generate input from Hartford on the land use chapter. There also will be another opportunity for input during the public hearings. Lori Hirshfield responded that once the document goes to public hearing, there is not much interest on the part of the TRORC Board to make changes. Lori suggested that TRORC take more time to work on the land use chapter and not rush the process. She stated that TRORC needs to carefully think through the land use approach. The Planning Commission agreed.

Bruce Riddle stated that he believes that the land use chapter has to be forward thinking. Robin Adair Logan noted that many of the items on Bruce Riddle's discussion list are forward thinking. Chris Sargent stated that a lot of the issues on the list are being addressed by TRORC. It was decided to go through the list chronologically.

- A. Potential for Regional Growth: Bruce Riddle stated that the traditional approach to growth isn't working. He cited villages in Hartford that are struggling economically such as West Hartford, Hartford Village and Wilder Village. He suggested providing a framework of how it all works. Many jobs in our region are low-wage jobs.

Chris Sargent stated that State Statutes direct land use. Lori Hirshfield stated that State Statutes reflect 1980s planning. She noted that Vermont's regions are dealing with different dynamics today. She thinks there is flexibility in State Statutes.

John Reid stated that we need to address water, roads, education, lower income and senior housing as well.

Jacques Harlow commented that White River Junction has come a long way in the last 65 years. He added that if we want to grow, zoning is the best tool.

- B. Preservation of Open Space & Vistas for Tourism: Bruce Riddle stated that he is concerned about the loss of vistas and noted that it's a tough nut issue. Chris Sargent responded that the TRORC can identify what we are trying to protect. Lori Hirshfield noted that Hartford's Zoning and Subdivision Regulations were amended to protect the working landscape. The Town has developed overlay districts. Chris acknowledged that at the regional level it varies by town. Bruce stated that Vermont needs a new housing model. He also stated that we need to incentivize good design. Robin Adair Logan expressed concern about the lack of appropriate design. Lori stated that she wants to look at additional tools to improve design. She suggested form-based zoning is an option. Matt Osborn asked Chris if there are any examples of form-based zoning in the TRORC region. Chris responded that Fairlee Village has some elements of form-based zoning.

Bruce Riddle asked about finding ways to preserve certain open spaces. Lori Hirshfield stated that the TRORC provides tools to municipalities to protect resources, but they don't identify specific sites. Jacques Harlow expressed concern about the loss of agricultural land.

- C. Developable Land: Bruce Riddle stated that Hartford is running out of developable land which limits what we can do.
- D. Ecology: Bruce Riddle noted that the Regional Plan should address the treatment of biological agents. John Reid expressed concern about the current drought.
- E. Community and Social Milieu: Bruce Riddle noted that some populations are becoming isolated so it is important to preserve connections between and across town boundaries. He also noted that it is important to have places to meet. Toby Dayman noted the TRORC is juggling different dynamics of each community. Chris Sargent responded that the TRORC balances the work of communities and their directive. He also noted that there are cycles and shifts at the state level as well.
- F. Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Discharge: Robin Adair Logan stated that she would like to see the Regional Plan address these issues.

Quechee Interstate Interchange Area: Chris Sargent stated that State Statutes are slow to change. He noted that the sticky issue with the Milne development was the retail development component and the conflict between the Town Plan and the Regional Plan due to the potential impact to the downtown and village centers. Chris noted that if the development was an office or industrial park, the TRORC would have been less likely to oppose the development. Lori Hirshfield stated that Hartford is unique in having multiple commercial areas. What we need is a joint study with local regional and state participation. Chris responded that we have to approach it under state policy.

Lori Hirshfield stated that she would like to see TRORC get away from cookie cutter approach to interchanges. Chris suggested developing a study of how the Quechee Interstate Interchange (QII) would affect other smaller villages. Robin Adair Logan noted that many people don't want to see any development on the Punt Farm field next to the I-89/I-91 on/off ramp. John Reid stated that he objected to the TRORC encouraging a truck stop at QII, which he thinks is inappropriate. Lori asked if it could be changed from travel businesses. Chris responded that it would be a board decision. Lori

suggested continuing to provide more ideas to the Board. Bruce Riddle stated that there is Board confusion about the issue of development or no development at the Quechee Interchange. We need to clarify that. He also noted that the Selectboard is concerned about losing tax revenue. Bruce noted the importance of the need to be more collaborative with TRORC. Robin Adair agreed and stated that others may be OK with one size fits all, but not Hartford. She added that Hartford is unlike any town in the region. Chris responded that TRORC looks at Hartford differently, but they are obligated to adhere to State Statute. Chris noted that TRORC has worked with Fairlee and Newbury on interchange development. Bruce cautioned that the signals to the development community from the Town and TRORC are not very good. In order to encourage more growth, that needs to change.

Lori Hirshfield reiterated her concern about the TRORC staff hurrying to meet a deadline to complete the land use chapter when more time is necessary to undertake a more thoughtful process. The Planning Commission agreed. Bruce Riddle suggested that he work with Lori to craft a resolution to the TRORC Board. The Commission agreed.

**Adjournment:** Jacques Harlow made a motion to adjourn. John Reid seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m. Bruce Riddle thanked Chris Sargent for attending the meeting.