

**Hartford Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee Meeting**  
**Town Plan Housing Chapter Update**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**July 12, 2023**

Planning Commission chair John Reid called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He followed by reading the hybrid meeting script and conducting a roll call.

**Attendance:** The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall in Room 2 at 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction on Wednesday, July 12, 2023. The meeting was also available remotely and several people participated that way.

**Planning Commission & Town Plan Steering Committee Members:**

John Reid	Planning Commission, term expires 1/11/24
Bruce Riddle	Planning Commission, term expires 2/7/25
John Heath	Planning Commission, term expires 9/5/25
Dylan Kreis	Planning Commission, term expires 6/27/26
Toby Dayman	Planning Commission, term expires 6/28/24
Colin Butler	Planning Commission, term expires 7/12/24
Jesse Pollard	Energy Commission
Andrew Winter	Twin Pines Housing Trust

**Staff:**

Lori Hirshfield	Director, Department of Planning and Development
Matt Osborn	Town Planner, Department of Planning and Development
Kevin Geiger	Planner, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC)

**Others Present:**

None

**Minutes of the June 29<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee Meeting:** John Reid asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of the June 29<sup>th</sup>. Being none, Bruce Riddle made a motion to approve the minutes of 6/29/23. The motion was seconded by Colin Butler and unanimously approved.

**Public Comments:** John Reid asked if there are any public comments. There were none.

**Goals, Strategies & Actions:** Lori Hirshfield started by providing a recap of the 6/29 meeting and noted that the Planning Commission/Steering Committee articulated their interest in building the goals, strategies and actions (GSA's). She noted the need that the GSA's connect to the housing chapter narrative. Lori stated that we made it through half of the GSA's last meeting. The goal for this meeting is to get through the remaining GSA's. She stated that we need to stay on track and suggested developing a parking lot for ideas to discuss later. The Steering Committee agreed.

John Heath asked why the Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee decided to eliminate the action to consider reinstating impact fees. Andrew Winter responded that for Twin Pines projects, they would use state and federal funds so it isn't a problem for them but may be for others. John Reid

noted that impact fees were suspended a few years ago. Colin asked if impact fees will be assessed at some point in the future. Lori responded that it is uncertain.

Under Action #1 under Goal 1, Strategy B, Andrew noted a typo and suggested separating the second sentence into its own action. The Steering Committee agreed.

Colin stated that he agrees with many of Bruce's suggested GSA's. He thinks the Steering Committee should go through them.

Under Goal 1, Strategy B, Action 5, Bruce suggested refining the language to make it stronger. The Steering Committee agreed.

Under Goal 1, Strategy C, Bruce suggested developing an action on healthy buildings/housing that goes beyond indoor air quality. The Steering Committee agreed.

John Reid noted that in different places in GSA's, we identify specific funds for housing. He asked if we need to specify multiple methods. The Committee agreed it should be general since funds change over time. Specific methods should go to the parking lot list to discuss at a later time.

Under Goal 1, Strategy C, Action 3, John Heath doesn't think the Town should be providing grants for energy upgrades when there is state and federal funding. He suggested changing the language to "identify potential grants". The Steering Committee agreed. Following discussion, it was agreed that staff would add some language about healthy buildings and interior air quality.

Under Goal 2, Strategy A, Action 2, John Reid asked what is a form-based code (FBC). Matt Osborn responded with a definition from the Congress for New Urbanism. Kevin Geiger added that a FBC focuses less on uses and more on appearance as well as adhering to smart growth principles. Andrew stated that a FBC provides more direction to developers. Colin stated he supports the idea of a FBC. He asked if any Vermont municipalities have adopted a form-based code. Kevin responded that several communities in Chittenden County have. It was suggested that at the end of the action add "in more developed areas". The Steering Committee agreed.

Under Goal 2, Strategy B, Action 1, Matt suggested including growth center into the action in addition to village center since Hartford is a Designated Growth Center. The Steering Committee agreed.

Colin expressed concern about that Hartford doesn't have the water and wastewater capacity to accommodate the housing that we need to build. Lori responded that she will request information from DPW noting that they are planning a study of their systems.

Under Goal 2, Strategy A, Action 3, Kevin suggested replacing this action with Bruce's action. The Steering Committee agreed.

Under Goal 2, Strategy B, Action 2, Kevin noted that the bylaw modernization grant will allow Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission to conduct an analysis of Hartford's zoning and the ways to improve housing opportunities. Specific recommendations will come after the Housing Chapter update.

Under Goal 2, Strategy C, Action 1, Kevin suggested replacing "utilize" with "expand and enhance". The Steering Committee agreed.

Under Goal 2, Strategy C, Action 3, Bruce suggested strengthening the language about the necessary investment (see his suggested language). The Steering Committee agreed.

Under Goal 2, Strategy C, Matt suggested adding an action about continuing work to evaluate straight commercial zoning districts and whether they are appropriate for mixed-use and residential uses. The Steering Committee agreed.

Bruce commented on the need for more mixed-use buildings in Hartford.

Bruce suggested establishing a new goal, “develop and identify programs that assist homeowners and landlords with older homes to maintain them so existing housing stock is not lost.” Colin agreed and noted that it should include seniors who own large homes that could be converted to accessory dwelling units. The Steering Committee agreed.

Bruce suggested that the Town provide funding for replacing or repairing mobile homes. Andrew responded that there is state funding available for mobile homes including technical assistance and mitigation of mobile home deficiencies and development of ADUs.

John Heath suggested rethinking the feasibility of mobile home parks.

**Next Steps:** Matt noted that over the next two weeks, staff will work on revising the GSA’s to incorporate the Steering Committee’s recommended changes as well as some on Bruce’s list of GSA’s. Lori stated that we will schedule a Steering Committee meeting sometime in mid-August.

Lori reported that the third community meeting will take place in September. She noted that an amendment was made to the contract with TRORC that will extend the contract beyond the end of the Vermont Municipal Planning Grant which requires a draft housing chapter be completed by the end of September.

Staff will get back to the Steering Committee about possible dates for the next meeting.

**Act 47:** Bruce expressed concern about the building height bonus in Act 47 for affordable housing projects. He thinks it may not be compatible with some neighborhoods. Kevin noted that so far he doesn’t see much in Hartford’s zoning that can’t work with the Act 47 requirements. He stated that TRORC will provide zoning recommendations as part of the bylaw modernization grant this fall.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.