

PLANNING COMMISSION

2010 Annual Report

Planning Commission Members: Steve Shea (Chair), Drew Simmons, Kari Dolan, Hadley Gaylord Jr., Brian Voigt, Todd White, and Ted Tremper

Individuals who retired from the Commission during the year: Russ Bennett and Peter Lazorchak

Town Plan Update. The Planning Commission spent much of the year working on an update of the 2005 Town Plan. Due to the desire to spend more time and gather more input from townspeople on the energy portion of the plan in particular, the Commission proposed the readoption of the 2005 Town Plan in June and the Selectboard voted to do so. The commission plans to present an updated town plan for adoption in the first half of 2011.

Flood and Fluvial Erosion Overlay District. The Commission completed work on changes to zoning in respect to the overlay districts along the Mad River that address flood and erosion hazards. The newly mapped Fluvial Erosion Overlay District zoning provides development standards in areas of the river that are susceptible to erosion while recognizing the desire for greater flexibility in respect to some areas of existing development along the river.

Renewable Energy. During the year, an energy development company, Citizens Wind, approached landowners and the town in respect to potential interest in developing a wind energy project consisting of 15-25 wind turbines approximately 400+ ft. high along the Northfield ridgeline. The planning commission and others held a number of meetings to discuss the potential project which was in the feasibility assessment stage. Since the current town plan prohibits most development, and wind turbines specifically, above 1,700 feet elevation in the Forest Reserve District, the town plan doesn't currently support development of such a project. After much discussion, the planning commission voted not to propose changing the current provision in the town plan. The consensus was that townspeople would need more detailed information on a project before any decision to change the town plan should be made.

Another new development in respect to renewable energy in 2010 was the appearance of solar tracker panel installations, especially along Route

100 south of Irasville. Since these installations are connected to the power grid, the permitting process is via the Public Service Board and local zoning and permitting is not applicable. As part of its update of the town plan, the planning commission is considering what if any guidelines for grid connected renewable energy projects should be made in the town plan.

Wastewater Committee. The Planning Commission established a wastewater committee to investigate the possible options in respect to decentralized wastewater systems in Waitsfield Village and Irasville. The committee applied for and received a municipal planning grant in order to hire professional assistance to conduct an updated survey of existing systems and needs as well as examine possible options to support replacement and new wastewater systems in the town center. A report of findings and recommendations will be made in early 2011.

Meetings & Information. The Planning Commission holds regular meetings the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 7 p.m. at the town office. The public is welcome at all meetings and time is available to voice comments, concerns, or suggestions. Please contact the Waitsfield Zoning Administrator for more information about meetings, records, or issues regarding the Planning Commission. Information on agendas, meeting minutes, and documents related to town planning can be found on the town's Web site at www.waitsfieldvt.us/planning as well as at the town office on Bridge Street or our blog at planwithus.blogspot.com.