

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

2006 Planning Commission members: Karl Klein (chair) Bill Parker (co-chair), Russ Bennett, Jamey Fidel, Hadley Gaylord Jr. Robin Morris, Peter Laskowski, Steve Shea, and Jamie Sherman.

Waitsfield's Planning Commission (PC) continued to have a productive year in 2006. The all-volunteer, nine-member commission is a Selectboard-appointed regulatory body which supports the development and implementation of Waitsfield planning and zoning.

Project Review. In 2006, the Planning Commission reviewed six subdivision applications and approved two additional building lots. In addition, seventy-eight zoning permit applications were submitted, which resulted in twenty-one new residences.

New Subdivision Regulations. After several years of work, the Planning Commission completed a proposed set of new subdivision regulations. The new regulations are needed to move forward with tax increment finance (TIF) district and growth center planning, to better implement the Town Plan, and to complement a newer version of zoning bylaws. The current subdivision regulations, adopted in 1990, are somewhat outdated. The Planning Commission hosted numerous public hearings on the proposed regulations and worked closely with interested members of the public to design a set of regulations that will accommodate growth in the town, while giving appropriate consideration to conservation of agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and important scenic and natural resources. The Planning Commission greatly appreciates the efforts of numerous individuals and local groups in helping us craft the new Subdivision Regulations, which have been moved to the Selectboard for their consideration and implementation in 2007.

Irasville. The Planning Commission worked on new zoning for the Irasville District through 2006 in accordance with the 2005 Town Plan and continues to see controlled growth in the Irasville District as a way to stem the state and national tide of sprawl development. A four-member subcommittee of the PC was established in 2006 to work with a planning consultant to develop a comprehensive set of zoning regulations for Irasville. During this effort a number of individual sub-districts were identified for Irasville which have been assigned unique designations and development goals. The PC proposes establishing changes in the zoning ordinance that give the sub-districts distinctive regulations on such things as lot size and coverage, permitted and conditional uses, set-backs and building heights. The draft changes were completed in December 2006 followed by a series of six meetings with landowners and other interested citizens in January 2007

Growth Center Planning. The rezoning in Irasville supports the Town's application for Growth Center Designation for Irasville and Waitsfield Village and the related TIF District application which will be of substantial benefit to the town. The Planning Commission was awarded a \$12,100 municipal planning grant to work on the application for a TIF district and growth center designation for Irasville.

Wildlife Inventory. In 2006, the planning commissions of Waitsfield and Fayston hired a team of ecologists to inventory natural resources in the two towns. The study is being conducted by Arrowwood Environmental, a consulting firm based in Huntington. Information gathered through this project will be extremely valuable as the two towns work to achieve natural resources and wildlife goals outlined in their town plans. Having accurate natural resources information will help to assure that natural resource goals are appropriate, progress in achieving those goals is measurable, and achieving those goals is done in a way that balances the rights of property owners with importance of the resources. The updated wildlife information will allow current and potential landowners to have better information for land use proposals and the development review process will be more predictable and efficient.

Scenic Roads. The planning commission, in concert with the Selectboard and a volunteer committee of citizens, created a policy to outline the proper care and maintenance of Waitsfield's scenic roads, an important local resource. The policy document includes an on-going oversight committee which will be created in 2007. Should any Waitsfield citizens have interest in assisting this group please contact the Town for additional information.

PC Representation on Other Boards. The Waitsfield PC has seats on the Mad River Planning District and the town's Water and Sewer Task Force, both of which have seen a substantial amount of activity in 2006 and have an impact on the planning process for Waitsfield. Through our increased activity, we seek to integrate and assist with all the various tasks which will lead to more balanced planning.

Meetings. Regular Planning Commission meetings are held on the first and third Tuesday of the month with special meetings warned in advance. Schedules of these meetings are published in the *Valley Reporter*. Information on agendas, active and proposed regulations and specific projects is available at the Planning and Zoning Office and on the Town Web site at <http://www.waitsfield.govoffice2.com>

Respectfully submitted,
Karl Klein and Bill Parker