

**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**January 3, 2018**

**Members Present:** Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Jeff Bendis, Eric Goldberg, Sara Stadler  
**Members Absent:** Sally Miller  
**Others Present:** Pete Fellows, Michael Storace, Peter Gregory, Michael Brands

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chair Segal called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the November 29, 2017 meeting were approved as submitted.

**III. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. River Corridor - Pete Fellows TRORC**

The State of Vermont is attempting to get more towns to adopt the model River Corridor regulations. Last year an early version was offered, which few towns adopted. This year the State is more amenable to working with municipalities to address the various issues that have arisen.

In the Village of Woodstock for example, a major issue is that most of the riparian areas along the river and streams are developed. Under the earlier version no development was allowed within the riparian area. The new directives would allow building between buildings but no closer to the water body.

Mr. Fellows showed the PC a map of the Village with the proposed river corridor boundaries and the FEMA flood zones. Also noted are the locations of all buildings, to get a sense of buffer infringement.

Woodstock currently has flood hazard, riparian and wetland protections. The new river corridor mapping layer addresses the flooding issues of Tropical Storm Irene in a more detailed manner. During Irene, water rushed down the hillsides into small streams and then into the river channel. Under normal FEMA mapped flooding, the water force is generated more within the river channel.

The river corridor concept recognizes that rivers and streams are live objects that continually change their channels and area of impact. The FEMA flood zones are determined by a hard and fast map that doesn't change over time.

Mr. Fellows explained the potential to rewrite the model regulations that would allow the building between buildings concept mentioned above. This can be achieved by allowing “corner to corner” building as long as the buildings are within 300' of one another. A map showing the areas to be built in can be produced. The main intent is to build no closer to the water body than the existing development pattern.

The difference between the river corridor and FEMA flood areas was clearly shown on the map of the Village.

The Village is intersected by three main water bodies: the Ottauquechee River which flows west to east, the Kedron Brook which flows from the south and the Gulf Stream which flows from the north. Due to this, the entire downtown area is impacted.

The State offers an incentive for adoption of the river corridor model. Matching funds of up to 75% of total municipal flood damage could be achieved. The increase would be +/- 6.5%, with 12.5% being owed by the Town.

Mr. Goldberg asked if Tropical Storm Irene was considered a 100 year storm.

Mr. Fellows stated it is better to view the storm issue as a 0.01% chance of happening per year.

The Town Planner stated the Irene event did exceed the FEMA 100 year flood boundaries in many instances.

Mr. Fellows noted the State will allow some leeway in adoption of the river corridor regulations, therefore Woodstock has the ability to write the regulations as they wish to a degree.

Mr. Segal mentioned the former Gilbert property on River Street. The property was damaged severely in Tropical Storm Irene and had been difficult to sell. After the VDRB granted a variance on the 100' riparian buffer, the property was able to be sold.

Ms. Boston asked about errors in the original river corridor maps which had been spotted last year.

Mr. Fellows stated that once the State is aware of the errors they can be repaired fairly easily.

Just last year the State completed a Lidar mapping of Windsor County at a one foot contour standard. This information will be available to correct the existing maps which were mainly completed with maps based on a 20 foot contour standard.

The Town Planner asked about the small stream issue in the Town. The small streams are not mapped by FEMA for flood hazard information. Under the original State model, the streams would have added a considerable number of properties to the review process.

Mr. Fellows felt there was flexibility on whether or not to include the areas of the small streams. This inclusion could be placed on hold with the hope of adding them in future zoning rewrites.

**B. Town Plan Mandates - Michael Storace, TRORC**

Mr. Storace, TRORC planner, presented the State mandate to include a discussion of forest blocks and wildlife habitat connectivity in Town Plans. The mandate becomes effective January 1, 2018, whereby any town plan adopted after this date requires the forest and wildlife component. The State statute addressing this had been emailed to members.

The Town of Tunbridge adopted this component last year. A copy of their language written by TRORC will be sent to the Town Planner.

The component can be placed anywhere in the Town Plan. In Woodstock, it would fit well within the Natural Elements and Open Space chapter which currently addresses wildlife and forestry issues. The Woodstock Town Zoning Regulations includes a 28 acre Forestry district.

Two main designations are required. Core forests, highest priority and priority, would need to be mapped for wildlife habitat. Additionally, connectivity blocks where wildlife is able to travel between towns is required. Most important is inter-town connections.

The intent is create a wildlife connection throughout the entire state and region. Mr. Fellows mentioned a map showing connections of the entire Northeastern US up through the Gaspé Peninsula in Canada. As global warming becomes more of an issue, wildlife will tend to migrate north to more appropriate temperate areas.

The Town Planner noted that for the past few years, the Conservation Commission has been working on this concept in the four corners area, which consists of Plymouth, Reading, Bridgewater, and Woodstock.

Mr. Fellows produced a number of maps showing the large forest blocks and areas where connectivity issues need to be addressed. The connectivity depends on lesser developed areas so as not to block or interfere with wildlife movement to other towns.

The Town Planner noted the issue is important. The adoption of the Enhanced Energy Chapter in the Town Plan will require that the forestry blocks and wildlife connectivity issues be addressed.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Town Plan Enhanced Energy Chapter**

Mr. Fellows presented maps that combine the potential alternative energy sites with the scenic viewshed study maps that had been completed a number of years back.

At the last PC meeting, it was agreed that a good way to map potential alternative energy sites was to remove those that are highly visible. The scenic viewsheds were mapped based on visibility from public roads.

Mr. Fellows explained the key to the map. The yellow overlay notes areas within the view from public roads. The green cross hatched areas are sites that contain more than five acres, are more than 500' from the nearest public road and show a good potential for

harvesting solar energy.

Transmission lines are shown in purple.

RAW means that the data is specific to the amount of solar sunshine available at a site.

Mr. Fellows recognizes that the map is extremely busy with a ton of information. To make it easier to read, a digital map will be forwarded. This will allow one to focus on the various areas of the town. It should help one understand the potential impacts on a neighborhood for example.

**B. Village Zoning Rewrite**

Chair Miller in discussions with the Town Planner recommended holding a second meeting each month to enable completion of the Village Zoning Regulations. This strategy has been used successfully in the past. The fifth Wednesday, January 31<sup>st</sup> is available. The PC agreed to reserve this date for an additional meeting.

The Town Planner will send around his list of potential changes. Hopefully, some minor amendments can be agreed to at this meeting. The more difficult amendments can be separated for further discussion at a later meeting.

**V. OPEN DISCUSSION - None**

**VI. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for January 31, 2018. The PC will also meet the following week on February 7, 2018. A public hearing on the 200 Westerdale rezoning application will be held that evening.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP  
Town/Village Planner