Westfield Planning Commission

Minutes

Tuesday, September 8, 2026, 4:00pm

Westfield Community Center, 59 North Hill Rd., Westfield, VT

In attendance: Brian Dunn, Kitty Edwards, Ellen Fox, Loren Petzoldt, Pat Sagui
Richard and Jan Degre, Jennifer Grace via zoom

1. Call Meeting to Order

Pat called the meeting to order at 4:08 pm

2. Additions/Changes to the Agenda

None

3. Approve:

- 082426 minutes

Loren made a motion. Ellen 2nd. Minutes approved.

4. Public Comment

None

5. Jennifer Grace – response to questions

Ellen read the questions from Jen into the minutes and members of the Planning Commission provided discussion and input for each question. Ellen invited Jen to provide a response after going through all the questions, or to make notes for any response to follow up with an additional set of questions. It seemed to work well for the Planning Commission to have questions in advance of the meeting for consideration, and then have discussion at the meeting. Ellen expressed gratitude for Jen participating in the process to revise the Town Plan and that the Planning Commission welcomes more participation. The Planning Commission finds it works well to have questions in writing prior to a meeting and then there can be discussion and responses at the meeting. If there are additional or follow up questions, Ellen mentioned that Jennifer could submit questions in the same way she has for this evening's meeting.

Jennifer Grace's question:

1. PROPOSED TOWN PLAN LANGUAGE

What specific language concerning the wastewater feasibility study is being proposed or considered for the updated Town Plan, including under "Challenges and Opportunities," housing, infrastructure, economic development, Village development or Act 181 implementation?

Will the Town Plan clearly identify the AES wastewater proposal as an unresolved feasibility study rather than an approved, necessary or committed Town project?

Please identify where residents can review the current working or marked-up Town Plan draft and any proposed wastewater-related language before the Commission takes action on it.

Planning Commission response:

The Planning Commission is still very early in the process of making recommendations to update the language in the Town Plan. No changes have been drafted at this point and so there is currently no proposal for specific language or identification of the wastewater study.

A draft of all proposed changes will be available at the Town office and on the Town website at least 30 days prior to a public hearing to hear feedback on the proposed changes.

Jennifer Grace's question:

2. PARCEL-LEVEL DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDOUT ANALYSIS

Did the Planning Commission, AES, NVDA or the Town conduct a parcel-by-parcel buildout or development-capacity analysis to determine how many additional homes, apartments, accessory dwelling units, multifamily units or businesses could legally and realistically be developed within Westfield Village?
If such an analysis exists:

- How many additional housing units or businesses were identified?
- On which parcels could that development occur?
- Did the analysis consider ownership, lot size, zoning, setbacks, existing structures, road access, wetlands, flood hazards, river corridors, conserved land and other development restrictions?
- Where can residents review the complete analysis?

If no parcel-level analysis was performed, please state that clearly.

Planning Commission response:
No parcel level analysis was performed. The Planning Commission has not invested time or resources in this detailed analysis without an indication that a wastewater system is feasible. Some aspect of the feasibility study is still in progress.

Jennifer Grace's question:

3. BASIS FOR THE TOWN SURVEY STATEMENTS

If no parcel-level buildout analysis was performed, what evidence supported the survey statements connecting additional Village businesses and denser housing with the need for a wastewater system?
Who drafted and approved those statements, and were they reviewed by the Planning Commission, Selectboard, NVDA or AES before being included in the survey?
Because each statement combined support for development with the assertion that wastewater would be required, how will the Commission interpret the responses?
Will the complete survey results be released, including the Agree, Neutral, Disagree and unanswered totals for each question?

Planning Commission response:
Ellen stated that she wrote the text of the questions using previous surveys and discussion within the Planning Commission as a guidance for the survey questions. The survey was not reviewed by NVDA or AES. The evidence to support a connection between wastewater capacity and additional dense development in the Village came from common knowledge of high water table in the Village area and the experience with the Mountain View facility wastewater capacity. The statement about dense development included the recognition of the corresponding need for wastewater infrastructure so that survey responses would provide a more realistic picture of the desires of the town residents. Ellen mentioned that there is a momentum from the State and regional planning to create infill and dense development in Villages, and that most people want and value a vibrant Village with shops and services. It is likely that people will opt for dense development without considering the need for infrastructure. At the same time, to achieve a more densely developed Village in Westfield, it would require infrastructure and so recognition of that was included in the survey statement.

The Planning Commission will not interpret the responses in any way except at their face value. If people disagree , or are neutral, or agree that they would want to see dense development with additional wastewater infrastructure .
The complete survey results will be available at the Town office after the completion of the survey.

Jennifer Grace's question:

4. ALTERNATIVES AND TOWN PLAN NEUTRALITY

The August 24 minutes acknowledge that future wastewater needs could potentially be addressed through private septic systems, a community system or another solution.
Will the updated Town Plan identify these alternatives fairly and remain neutral regarding the particular $8–$11 million AES proposal until documented property-level needs, alternatives, costs, development capacity and affordability have been fully evaluated?
Will the Town Plan avoid language stating or implying that a centralized wastewater system is necessary for Village housing or business development unless that conclusion is supported by a parcel-level analysis and other documented evidence?

Planning Commission response:
The role of the Planning Commission and the update of the Town Plan is to collect and reflect current information from and about the Town. Again, the Planning Commission is very early in the process and does not anticipate making a recommendation about wastewater infrastructure. The feasibility study results are due to be reported to the Selectboard, not to the Planning Commission.

Jennifer raised the point that the wastewater issue was initially discussed by the Planning Commission and that the Planning Commission worked on it for about a year. Ellen responded that the Planning Commission was taking into consideration the changes in the Zoning Bylaw and considered that in fill development and changes of use in the Village are limited by wastewater capacity. At the same time, there was grant resources available to fully support a feasibility study for a wastewater system.

Jennifer Grace's question:

5. ACT 181, FUTURE LAND USE AND VILLAGE BOUNDARIES

Is Westfield or NVDA considering an Act 181 Future Land Use designation, including possible Tier 1A or Tier 1B eligibility, for Westfield Village?
If so:

- What designation is being considered?
- What geographic boundaries are proposed?
- Why has NVDA identified Westfield Village as "expanded by RPC" and referenced an additional area described as "Troy Village (Westfield)"?
- Who proposed or requested these boundaries?
- What additional housing, business or infrastructure development is contemplated within them?
- Does the proposed designation assume, encourage or depend upon community wastewater, increased housing density or additional Village development?
- How would the designation relate to Westfield's housing targets and the proposed wastewater project?

Please provide the relevant draft maps, NVDA recommendations, proposed Town Plan language and supporting materials for public review.

Planning Commission response:
The Planning Commission is not considering Tier 1A or 1B designation. In addition to the lack of physical infrastructure, the Town lacks capacity to administer those designations locally. As far as housing goals or the land use map, the Regional Planning Commission presented a map to the Planning Commission and a warned meeting was held in Westfield to gather feedback, and the map was available in the Town office for review and feedback. Ellen mentioned that she thinks the regional plan is still in the process of being approved. The housing targets in the regional plan are purely aspirational. There is no requirement for any town to articulate how and where those housing goals might be fulfilled.

The Planning Commission is not aware of changes made by NVDA to the land use map for Westfield and hasn't proposed or requested changes to the map.

6. Town Plan Survey –
- current tally of returned surveys

11 printed copies and 21 online responses.
Ellen will enter the paper survey responses into the online survey and we will discuss preliminary results at our next meeting.
- Senior Meals Site surveys

Kitty will distribute at senior meals another time.

- outreach for additional surveys

Richard mentioned that many have been passed out at recycling. We discussed a planning commission member may attend recycling and collect surveys and
Richard could lend his ipad on Sept 12, and will also have paper copies. Kitty, Loren, and Ellen will go on Sept 12 to collect surveys from people.

Pat will ask Niki to make more copies and ask Niki to encourage people to complete the survey when they pay their tax bill.

Ellen will make sign that says we are accepting surveys through the end of October 1, and send it to Niki and will take one to recycling.
- other Survey business/response updates

7. Identify sections of Town Plan that need updating
- timeline to get section notes to Pat to draft updated Town Plan

Pat has access to the draft of the Town Plan and is getting oriented to how to make suggestions and edits.
Loren has access and will make time to view the draft
- review/amend proposed draft timeline from 082426 meeting

Pat discussed with Richard that the updated Town Plan may not be finalized by the end of the year. There is not pressure to finish this for any particular grant application. Pat will check with Niki on any upcoming grants.

-Homework:
- Pat – miles of road – State: 8.594, Town: 22.73, Legal Trails: 7.67

We will put the road information in the Town Plan

- Kitty – Housing data research

Kitty found the 2020 census data and that was different from the 2010 data. We could address the reasons and specific instances for some of the changes, though including every detail is not helpful. The kinds of questions that we need to answer include owners v renters and out of state owners? What constitutes a vacancy?

Kitty had information on housing units being built, and age of some housing stock. The median value is $307K in Westfield. Kitty had specific information from the 2020 census. We will make a table of the data Kitty found.

Ellen will look to see if we can edit tables in the shared draft of the town plan in google docs. The half hour preceding our next meeting will be devoted to demonstration and practice sharing and editing google docs.

- Ellen – check property transfer tax records

Ellen shared that the property transfer tax records provide an interesting summary by quarter of all the land transactions by Town. Loren will look at the housing section of NVDAs report with the goal to identify similar communities or to use NVDA data in our Town Plan.

8. Draft Town Plan Document sharing

- demonstration, print instructions to use google docs (Ellen)

We will do this during the half hour preceding our next meeting

- Loren and Kitty – test access questions/results
- Q & A –

We will do google docs at the beginning of the next meeting.

9. Other Business

None

10. Next Meeting

Wednesday Sept 23

3:00pm for training to share google docs and 3:30 pm for the rest of the agenda.

11. Adjourn

Loren made motion to adjourn and Kitty 2nd. Adjourned at 5:34 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ellen Fox