Westmore Planning Commission Date: July, 22, 2025

Minutes

Attending: Greg Gallagher, Bob Kennedy, Ethan Swift Miriam Simonds, Donna Dzugas (zoom), Laurie Laikin (zoom)

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| Topic | Discussion | Outcomes |
| Call to order | Bob called the meeting to order at 6:10. He read the rules of order and the agenda and asked for any additions, there were none. |  |
| Town Plan update | The WPC members looked at the new GIS map from NVDA per Act 181 (i.e., now hanging on the wall) that shows how Act 181 will apply to the town, at least how NVDA has interpreted this as a draft.  There is still ongoing discussion of the new FEMA maps. Individuals will have an opportunity to discuss perceived discrepancies.  Bob went over the notes from the last meeting with representatives from the NVDA. They noted areas that need to be updated in the Town Plan. NVDA last consulted on the town plan in 2018. The new plan is for 2026. It should include future land use, using regional maps and the changes in ACT 250. New lands will be designated depending on valuable resources they contain. It will be important to look at the new flood plain maps.  Ethan and Bob have watched the development of VT Act 181and Ethan shared that it is not settled yet. The State needs to “come up with a plan to do the plan”. The Westmore Planning Commission (WPC) should be involved in the implementation of this legislation.  It was suggested that representatives of the Path Forward groups and the Westmore Association be involved in the planning process. It will be important to incorporate the vision of each group into the town plan if possible.  Ethan reported that VT Act 59 should also be considered since it is more concerned with conservation. Act 59 has a goal of increasing conserved land. VT Act 181 s more about land use related to housing and development.  Bob stated that the WPC and any other participants need to be aware of these pieces of legislation when going through the Town Plan update. Ethan stated that it will be important to ensure a collaborative effort in the planning process.  The Village Center designation will be possible with the completion of the new Town Plan per Act 181. This supports Westmore going from Level One to Level Two, which creates pathways to funding opportunities.  The plan should also address transportation and other road issues. Dan keeps up with updates from VTRANS and the Municipal Roads General Permit information. Again, Ethan noted that local knowledge is most valuable.  Alison Low (NVDA) felt Westmore was in a good place to get a municipal planning grant. The timeline for the grant process is:  **September 1, 2025** - Online Application will Open **November 3, 2025**- Application Deadline **November/December 2025** - Award Announcement **December 1, 2025** - Grant Term Starts **December 31, 2027**- Grant Term Ends **January 31, 2028** - Grant Closeout Due  Ethan said that he also thought the hazard mitigation plan should be used in the revision of the town plan, especially since it addresses events that may affect town residents such as flooding and road closures. The plan will need to consider the interior forest use plan as well. Ecologically sensitive areas will need to be addressed, and the focus is to increase the density of housing which are already developed in order to conserve land. Some restrictions on housing will change in order to support these initiatives. Bob said it will be good to explore what this may mean for different types of housing that could be built in Westmore. It may mean changes in lot sizes.  Bob noted that the Town Energy Plan will need to be reviewed with consideration of how it addresses energy needs and impacts conservation mandates.  Miriam noted the importance of including town residents throughout the process. Bob noted that public hearings are required.  The by-laws will also have to be changed to reflect any new information and to uphold the new town plan. | WPC members should review the existing town plan.  Representatives from the Path Forward groups and the Westmore Association will be invited to participate in the planning process.  Pam will find out the next meeting dates for each group and invite them to appoint a representative.  A date for a joint meeting will be set. |
| Westmore housing | Westmore housing is currently market-driven with primarily upper income people buying available housing. This makes housing difficult for trades people, educators and other essential workers. Less affordable housing stops people from moving here and hurts our workforce. In the last few years short-term rentals have kept coming up for discussion. Bob noted that Westmore’s perspective has been to wait for Vermont to develop any regulations. It was noted that boat houses can be repaired as they are grandfathered in, but that repairs must be on the existing footprint with no additions. This may be an area to consider when revising the by-laws. It was noted that the NVDA usually works with the WPC on the revision of the by-laws at the same time as the town plan. |  |
| WPC role in town development | Bob asked if the WPC should anticipate and address changes that may happen as the town plan is revised. For example, the lake is under VT State jurisdiction, but the town plan states there should be encouragement of navigable waters. Boats can currently be moored anywhere on the lake. It was noted that there should be representation from the WPC on the long-range management plan of the Willoughby State Forest. | Ethan will find out the timeline for the long-range plan of the forest |
| Closing | The minutes from the 6/24/2025 meeting were reviewed and approved with Greg so moving and Ethan seconding, The meeting was closed with Bob so moving and Greg seconding. |  |