

# Grafton Planning Commission Report on the Town Plan Update

January 31, 2019

This report is in accordance with 24 VSA § 4384(c), which states: *“When considering an amendment to a plan, the Planning Commission shall prepare a written report on the proposal. The report shall address the extent to which the plan, as amended, is consistent with the goals established in § 4302.”*

The last two revisions of the Town Plan were completed in 2008 and 2014. The proposed 2019 Town Plan is an update from those prior Town Plans. In preparing an updated plan, the Planning Commission has extensively reviewed all aspects of the plan and made updates to reflect the changes in our community as well as needed compliance with regional and state planning standards.

## Summary:

The 2019 Grafton Town Plan is consistent with the goals established in state statute under 24 VSA § 4302. **The Town Plan advances the general goals and purposes of a coordinated, comprehensive planning process.** The Town Plan update was completed over multiple years during which time many of these meetings were well attended by Grafton citizens. The Town Plan update was always focused on those plan sections that would have the greatest local impact on our residents and land owners.

The Town Plan advances the specific goals outlined in state statute. **First, the amendments to the Grafton Town Plan do not alter land use development patterns.** The Town Plan still maintains the desired settlement pattern of sustained growth in our villages and hamlets with less intensive development in our rural lands. Across the various sections of the Town Plan, this land use policy remains an established goal. **Second, the Town Plan encourages economic development in our community and guides those investments as to protect our cultural, historical, and natural resources.** Economic growth is encouraged, but at a rural scale and in those locations where growth can be accommodated. The Town Plan goals are for a strong and diverse rural economy that provides opportunity to the greatest number of town residents. **Third, the Town Plan advances land use and economic development policy that encourage affordable housing, prioritizes education and family services essential to raising the next generation of Grafton residents.** The chapters in the Town Plan that cover education, community services and facilities, and housing are all focused on sustaining our community for future generations.

**The Town Plan has two major updates that are partially guided by new state laws and guidelines.** The **Flood Resiliency Chapter** encourages Grafton to implement best management practices for flood resiliency, reinforces existing flood zoning regulations limiting new development in identified flood hazard / fluvial erosion areas and provides improved mapping for identifying those areas. The **Energy Chapter** contains many recommendations for making efficient use of energy, planning for the development of renewable energy resources, and reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. What is called an ‘enhanced’ energy element, the **Energy Chapter** promises to provide residents a greater say in how large-scale energy projects are reviewed and permitted in the Town of Grafton. The format for the energy chapter was developed by the Windham Regional Commission and we are confident that it meets the requirements outlined by State of Vermont energy planners.

## How to participate:

All inquiries regarding the Town Plan update can be directed to Dave Culver and Charles Wise (vermontculver@gmail.com / cwise@grafftonvt.org). Adjoining towns are strongly encouraged to review the plan and provide comment. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on January 15, 2019 and following that hearing either make additional changes to the Town Plan or forward the proposed Town Plan to the Selectboard. The Selectboard must hold their own public hearings before acting to adopt the proposed Town Plan.