

# Grafton Planning Commission

## Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

This meeting was held electronically pursuant to 1 VSA 312, including The Legislature's H.861 (2020) "Temporary Suspension of Designated Physical Meeting Location Requirements".

- I. Meeting called to order at 6:38 pm.
- II. Attendance – PC Commissioners: Dave Culver, Ben Jones, Chris Wallace, Matt Siano, Eric Stevens
- III. Agenda approved by consensus with no adjustments.
- IV. Motion to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2021 Regular Grafton Planning Commission meeting by Ben Jones. Seconded by Chris Wallace
- V. There is a Public Hearing on the proposed changes to Grafton's Flood Hazard Regulations on April 13 @ 6:30 pm. It has been properly warned and has been 'advertised' in the March edition of the Grafton News. It will run again in the April edition which will be out before the public hearing.
- VI. Town Plan  
The Town Plan was approved by the voters through a vote as part of the 'virtual' Annual Town Meeting. This now needs to be forward to the Windham Regional Commission for their approval and then to the state to be recorded. There was a long discussion about the present state of the Town Plan and what, if anything, should be done next. It seemed to be the opinion of the commissioners that the 'core' of the Plan is good enough that there is no reason to hurry to make changes. That said, there are multiple areas that could use improvement. Areas included:
  - a. The Education Chapter is out-of-date because of the changes that have taken place at the state and local levels.
  - b. The Goals/Policies/Recommendations at the end of the each chapter should be reviewed, consolidated and prioritized to make them more usable.
  - c. The Economy Chapter involved the most discussion regarding how the Town's demographics have changed, even over the past five years, and how we can be more proactive in guiding the future.
- VII. Municipal Planning Grant
  - a. The Planning Commission discussed the possibility of applying for a Municipal Planning Grant - <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>
  - b. Summary of the Grant

- i. The grant will require a [resolution](#) from the Selectboard at some point.
- ii. The grant requires a 10% match from the Town; the PC asked for \$500 in this year's budget specifically for this purpose. This means we can apply for up to \$5,000 (plus our \$500 equals \$5,500). Individual towns can apply for up to \$22K but that would require the Selectboard to find up to an additional \$1,700 from somewhere else.
- iii. The online application will open on August 1 and close on October 1. There is also the option of partnering with other towns for up to \$35,000.
- iv. Grant winners will be announced in December, 2021 and the project must be completed by May, 2023 (we think!). There was some confusion regarding the dates in the [MPG Program Description](#) document. They seemed to have 'cut-and-pasted' the dates from last year's document and forgot to update the years. The document lists the end-of-project date as May, 2022 and the 'mid-project report' is due in August 2021. So the end project MAY BE May, 2022 as written in the document, but that didn't make sense to us; we think it's May, 2023.
- v. The goal of the grant is "to promote planning, revitalization, and development activities that maintain Vermont's land use goal of compact settlements separated by rural lands."
- vi. "Eligible projects must have a clear connection to planning and implementation of the municipal plan."
- vii. The actual [application process](#) looks pretty intimidating.
- viii. A [summary of the grants](#) awarded last year was reviewed.
- ix. Funds may be used to:
  1. Underwrite expenses for public meetings and hearings, informational workshops citizen surveys, outreach, and notification costs
  2. Support research, data collection, capacity studies, inventories, and mapping
  3. Pay consultants, interns, regional planning commission staff, or legal fees associated with the project
  4. Purchase development rights, easements, and titles of properties for housing and conservation purposes identified in the municipal plan
  5. Purchase materials needed to produce a plan, bylaw, or implement or administer the project -- like writing supplies, maps and copies
- x. Funds may not be used to:
  1. Reimburse expenses incurred before the grant is awarded
  2. Subsidize tax mapping
  3. Pay municipal officials or municipal staff
  4. Capitalize a "reserve" fund for use beyond the grant period
  5. Purchase computer hardware, software licenses or subscriptions, or other equipment not related to a specific grant funded planning event
  6. Pay for the cost of administering the MPG grant such as municipal or regional staff time for documenting grant expenditures and submitting the progress report and close-out
  7. Support projects incompatible with the Regional Plan
- xi. Grant funds are regionally apportioned so we will only be competing against the other WRC towns.
- xii. Funding decisions are made by the DHCD Commissioner based on the following
  1. Project Readiness and Need - 20 points

2. Public Outreach and Project Partnership - 20 points
  3. Consistency with Statewide Goals - 35 points
  4. Project Approach - 35 points
  5. Application Quality and Past Performance - 10 points
- c. The board also began a superficial discussion about priorities for the grant. Three potential areas were discussed but the final decision will require discussion with the Selectboard.
    - i. Increasing the accuracy of the Flood Hazard Mapping
    - ii. A community survey.
    - iii. The wastewater initiative.
  - d. The commission plans to invite Bill Bennett of the WRC to a PC meeting to get his input and hope Bill K. and at least one Selectboard rep might also be able to attend. The board realizes there is a public hearing on the same night as the next PC meeting (April 13) but waiting until May seems too far out.
- VIII. There were no public comments
- IX. Next Scheduled Regular Meeting – Tuesday, April 13, 2021; directly following the Public Hearing @ 6:30 pm; via teleconferencing, assuming there are no changes with the COVID-19 situation.
- X. Meeting adjourn at 812 pm