

## Grafton Planning Commission

Regular Monthly Meeting

Tuesday February 6, 7:00 PM

Grafton Town Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81340393010?pwd=TDk5Y3FDaUNYNVBHNmRRVGNwbWRiZz09>

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### MINUTES

1. Meeting called to order at 7:15. Present: Buzz Fisher, Ron Pilette, Eric Stevens, Lester Schwalb, Matt Siano (Chair).

Public present: Liisa Kissel

2. Approval of agenda with addition of one new item under new business : upcoming legislation at the state level
3. Approval of the December 12th minutes.
4. Wastewater plan. Seth from the Select Board checked in with Erin from T&B. T&B says that they need more time. They are checking to confirm what types of methods will be approved by the State.  
Q: Are they looking for other approved methods that could potentially apply to lands that have previously been dismissed under the previous methods.  
A: The answer to what they are now doing is not yet known. There has been no committee meetings yet with them. Matt has spoken to Seth, suggesting that we should have a plan in relation to T&B.
  - Should the Select Board pull out of the contract?
  - What is the Select Board going to do if T&B come back with an answer that we can't use? Haven't T&B received from the town the additional \$34K in order to get to the 90%?
  - What does the 90% mean now?
  - The project has kind of circled back to the beginning inquiries of this research, but now, we are at the 90% report and have paid 90%.

Matt: suggested that we continue our alternative methods research. Have Hannah give us her opinion. With our budget, we can pay her to gather information

Eric: if we can look at some of things that others have dismissed or not carried very far but are potential solutions to parts of the problem, could be useful to the state, and will be there if and when we choose to do something in Grafton. Particularly, interested in how to get rid of PFAS.

Matt: We do have the approval form the Select Board to carry on with our research, the Living Machine kind of system and any other solutions to our issues. Matt will contact Hannah and David. There is also a person at Texas A&M.

Lester: are the Living Machines scaleable smaller?

A: Problem is the need for greenhouses.

General discussion: Is there another use that we can tie the greenhouses to a useful function? Can't use the water for food crops; it's a state rule but they may be out of caution not from science. It has to do with what people dump in their water, so it would require frequent testing. One also has to get people to accept it. Selling it to the entire town not just the town center. Economic viability of the town is of interest to everyone; but human nature is not to invest in a hypothetical and but to understand what you're hedging. Need to nail down the technical issues and the financial issues. The grant expires at the end of 2026 so we can't drag our feet too much.

Public comment: The Select Board, or half of it, does understand what we're trying to do. It may be good for Planning Committee to be on the Select Board agenda each meeting even if there isn't that much to report.

5. Matt's term is up 2024, Eric 2025, Lester 2026, Ron 2026, Buzz 2027. Select Board will have an organizational meeting the night of Town Meeting day and then one meeting after that, and typically the next meeting will have all of the appointments. All before April 1. Matt generously is willing to stay on.
6. PC timeline: Next Town Plan due to be completed in 2028. We should focus on a little something each month. What do we need to do for the State? Which issues should we focus on? Eric: resilience to what is happening in our weather—flooding, ice storms. We need awareness of and understand mitigation of these hazards. What we're seeing in Barre and Montpelier could have happened to us. How do you continue to function as a government when events are beyond our financial capacity. Land management, building infrastructure.

Matt: Another issue is that the State wants EV stations on public access land. We have the Town Hall, the Village Park and the Town Garage.

Public comment: What is the role of the WRC for completing the Town Plan? Do we ask them to come here?

Eric: Eric and Cheryl Kauffman are the commissioners to the WRC. WRC will do some of the work for us if we contract them. General discussion with public and PC: WRC website is also useful. The last plan took more than 3 years; our old plan expired before we had the new one and that had consequences. There are certain grants for which we wouldn't be eligible, including the waste water grant, would not be available to us. Grafton hired WRC employee to assist with our Town Plan. He had experience with the WRC and Woodstock and a national planners' certificate. We need to start working one chapter at a time. Can start the easier chapters first. Aim for a full draft by the end of 2026 or maybe earlier mid-2026. 12 chapters with 5 appendices. First, we should look at the present plan and ask if these are the appropriate chapters? Are there chapters that need to be split apart or eliminated. There are a statutory set of issues to be covered. We need to ask Chris to find out if there have been changes to the statutory set.

Also municipal planning grant \$5K-\$10K application cycle opens in July 2024. Application must be submitted by the Fall 2024. Award would be in July 2025. This is the typical source of contracting money to pay for WRC staffer to assist with the town plan. These State grants are also the source of the river studies that we had done re: flash flooding. Typically it gets administered by WRC. There info is on Vermont Government website. Vermont Town Planning. has a manual and checklist. It's useful to use WRC in the planning, helps also with evaluating the compatibility of our town plan with regional plan. Some of us will undergo

training for doing this task. Good idea to have Chris come in, but we need a specific issue for him to help us with. Also, we had spoken of Chris for liaison re: town discussion/education of wastewater. So, Hannah can come to the next meeting and Chris can come the following meeting (and invite Chris to zoom in for meeting with Hannah).

Decision: Starting with our March meeting we should each look at the town plan and come in with suggestions about significant topics for the plan.

Matt: WRC recently sent a survey on behalf of Parks & Recreation. Might be useful to inquire how long it took them to do it and how much it cost.

Lester: Last year we discussed surveying Grafton residents about their vision of the future for Grafton, but we hadn't agreed on the topics of a survey or if it is desirable to do.

Eric: There is also a question about how to process the answers. Also, how to make a survey representative. The only way is to knock on doors because people don't have internet or don't do surveys. Could use paper insider in the Grafton News. Who you get to respond is as crucial as what you have in the questions.

7. WRC update. It's been pretty quiet. Eric will go back through his e-mail and send the attachments so that we know what they are up to.

8 New Business. Ron discussed proposed. S236 moving through the system. This legislation would have an effect on local towns. It proposes to limit adjoining landowner participation, objections would be limited to public health, public safety, and traffic and removes aesthetics as a criteria with respect to new gas and electric purchases, investments, and facilities. Should we address this legislation? Once they start limiting local participation, would they stop at aesthetics? And also should aesthetics be limited?

Lester: Are you imagining a huge solar array that one could not object to on aesthetic grounds?

Ron: Aesthetic considerations are more than looks—it can be sound, reflection.

General discussion: it is removing one category of four by which a discussion could be had at the town level. Could be a slippery slope re: making limits on discussion. How can you prove safety and traffic: can be difficult to make a case. This law could seriously limit town rights. This applies to projects (land, facilities) that require a certificate of public good.

We should forward to the Select Board and ask them to include it on their agenda as an item to be discussed.

9. New Business: There's another piece of legislation (289 in the House) that does away with group net metering. It is a new rule that would disallow a group of people (or an individual) to have a connection to the energy network not adjacent to their property. This would disallow community solar. Possibly, utilities get to eliminate paperwork burden and they don't benefit alot from community solar.

Potential effect on Grafton, the opportunity for group net metered system across the road from the town highway garage, which under the old regs could offset other public buildings that the town chooses to offset, but under the new regs, could only serve the town highway garage itself.

Decision to forward this proposed legislation to the Select Board and put this proposed legislation as well on their agenda.

10. Next meeting March 12, 7pm

11. Meeting ended 9:24 pm