

## **Grafton Planning Commission**

Regular Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, July 16, 7:00 PM

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

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

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**Planning Committee: Matt Siano, Eric Stevens, Buzz Fisher, Les Schwalb**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. PC meeting call to order 7:30**

#### **2. Approval of agenda**

#### **3. Approval of June minutes**

#### **4. Preparation for next Town Plan.**

Matt crafted question that will be published in Grafton News, asking townspeople to reflect on and send in opinions about the future of the town, as they envision it. Preface with: "we are beginning the process of town planning" to set the context. Alert people that the Town Plan is the place in which significant issues are taken up that will affect us all (e.g. energy, flood resilience, land use, the Grafton economy).

The Planning Committee should be aware: we most likely will not get a good cross-sectional information about the residents' opinions from this method of placing a call for opinions in the Grafton News.

The people who are most willing to opine will reply but we likely will not get a comprehensive view. We should follow up and tell people in next issue that your fellow townspeople are giving their opinions; you should give your opinion, as well.

Crucial to get feedback from the town early in the process. Putting draft versions out to the public is part of the process.

We should think about the big issues. What are the biggest challenges that we face?

Mitigating climate change could be a big challenge for 2028-2036.

People disagree about the causes of climate change but the Town Plan needs to consider how to mitigate it.

The Town Plan is what the town builds its ordinances and regulations on top of.

So, the Town Plan is important for laying a foundation for any challenges that we are going to face. Sometimes our planning needs to adhere to state guidelines about some of the issues (even though many of the policies set by the state are not relevant to a small town such as ours).

It makes sense to generate ideas from as wide a group of people as possible, not just full-time voting residents but everyone, including the non-voting townspeople.

Title: "Will Grafton exist in the future?" To startle people into paying attention. If we don't get a good quantity of response, we could move next time with a ridiculous idea to get people's attention (e.g., Planning Committee recommends hot air ballooning instead of private vehicles; the subway station will be across from the Grafton Inn).

As the PC works through the Town Plan, it should begin with the easy topics. We will have to alter change some sections anyway as state legislation changes.

One possible item for the Town Plan: community funding of purchase of easements for habitat connectivity and for flood planning for streams. The land use laws can deprive a person of property value when the use of his/her land is constrained in order to achieve goals that benefit the community. The public should invest in this action for the public good so that the property owner is not the only one who is impacted. This is the only equitable way to achieve the public goals. For example, restoration of flood plains or a vegetative buffer zone along streams. Because we have channeled streams, essentially building sluiceways of our streams, the water picks up velocity and picks up rocks. We have to slow the water down. These two issues (wildlife connectivity and flood management) should be linked.

Discussion of an area in Grafton that could be a potential flood plain area along 121 heading to Houghtonville. This kind of action was taken in Brattleboro, took out some residential apartments and lowered the area for flood resiliency. How did they purchase that property for this holding basin? Streams need a bigger area to collect water and debris.

Keep the Town Plan revision as part of our agenda moving forward. Resilience and disaster preparedness will need to be expanded. The revision of Act 250 will impact our resiliency and land use section of the Town Plan. We will also need something on AirBnbs.

**5. Old Business.** The wastewater impasse. We are waiting to hear from T&B. The state gave us 90 days. And we were given a list of 8 or 9 things from A&R, things that we need to do. Engineering study for municipal water system. And T&B has not answered any of this demand from the state. And T&B has not done the 90% report.

**6. New Business.** What can Grafton do to mitigate PFAS.

Improvement of Town Office technology for remote meeting communication. The current AV internet system is not working to the degree that we need, given the need for remote communication. We need to get expertise to solve our problems. There are 3 options for improving the existing technology. We should get more than one quote. We had budgeted \$2000 for improved technology and Select Board said that they would do it but they didn't implement it yet.

Hazard Mitigation/emergency management meeting coming up. Discussion of creating a better system for multipronged support needed in emergencies, other than rebuilding roads and

infrastructure. We need to obtain knowledge of how to run the books so that if outlays open to FEMA reimbursement, we can get reimbursed.

Some discussion of different ways, going forward, to build resiliency. Stratton, Ludlow: Ironically, if you build a road, you build a river. Often, Development makes it impossible to absorb water. So, we need different kind of creation with the means of increasing absorbency. Villages really need to be moved out of the flood plain. Need for dredging rivers, filled up with debris. Need flood plain restoration. But, it's expensive. It may mean re-capturing land that we have enjoyed using for centuries.

**7. Next meeting August 20, 2024**

**8. Meeting adjourned 9:47**