

Grafton Planning Commission

Regular Monthly Meeting

Tuesday April 8, 2025, 7:00 PM

Grafton Town Hall 2nd Floor

ADA Accessible

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

MINUTES

Planning Committee: Matt, Ron, Eric, Lester, Buzz

Call to order at 7:05

1. April Agenda approved with some additions to the "New Business" section.
2. March minutes approved.
3. Review of Town Plan Chapters 10 and 11. We will include a narrative about the flooding in the summer of 2023, similar magnitude to 2003/2004. Also note what is happening in the northern part of the state. Flooding of the Winooski is getting worse and flash flooding in the northeast kingdom becoming more frequent and damaging (two years in a row, 2023 and 2024). So, even though this serious flooding was not in Grafton, worthwhile pointing out that it is a widespread issue in VT. Power companies are stretched, emergency services dealing with a much bigger problem. Something that we should be better prepared for.

A suggestion was made` that we could create a small series of weather stations/sensors in key locations, that are near people's houses, with wi-fi, that would give us up-to-date information re: water levels. We need a rate-of-rainfall sensor to be placed in all of the upper watersheds, such as north of us in Windham, that come into Grafton. It's the velocity of the stream that picks up the rocks and sediment and erodes the banks. Most of the nation worries about is inundation flooding; we don't have that problem. But, we do need to be able to respond quickly to flash flooding, particularly because some houses are close to the stream. Some discussion of coordinating with the app called "Tempest" which would make the information available to all the relevant town personnel/offices. This would be low-cost and could be added to the "emergency management" section of the plan as a 'recommendation for action" and go into the Grafton budget. We have to be more engaged and pay closer attention to this flow of information, because the conditions will be increasingly dangerous. NOAA has been hit by serious budget cuts but Burlington right now is still giving out weather data. A group of engineers called Transcend Engineering makes a cell phone app called "RiverAware." Eric will reach out to this company and find out if there is any information about sensors.

We need to map where are the erosion areas? Where does the river need an embankment? Can we look into protecting those areas? We can do this where we are protecting public infrastructures. We are not permitted to protect private residences. But we can protect roads.

Do we have any new flooding areas that we need to add to this list in the new plan?
There was surveying a few years ago for the national flood insurance program.

Here is an important action item: when a public hearing takes place, we need to jump right on that and give our information. In 2015, preliminary surveying for flash-flooding erosion potential but that has to be made more accurate assessment—that would cost about \$7K. Identifying particular points on the river that are most vulnerable. LIDAR mapping was supposed to tell us elevations but does not provide soil types. We need that LIDAR data and on-the-ground data in order to get ANR to correct the river corridor map in Grafton. In this section of the plan, we have to meet the requirements of the current river corridor legislation for Windham Regional to sign off, so that is where engaging Matthew Bachler is needed (he is coming to the next mtg). He is also going to help us with the planning grant for the new town plan—November deadline. We need to get him on board as a consultant.

There were recommendations already in the plan, planting willows to protect that river banks, but we need to implement them. Also, we still need to consider water contamination issues, such as PFAS.

In case of flooding washing out footbridges, one end of the footbridge should have a cable to prevent the bridge from damaging bridges further down stream.

There was short discussion of a gazebo, but that kind of event space is not as much in demand now. The money that it would cost would be better spent elsewhere

Wastewater issue. Having all Airbnbs pumping requirements based on occupancy is still under discussion at the Select Board

4. Act 250/June's property. Discussion Heran Lane Properties, June's property/glamping project. Trouble accessing June's document (changes to document that was sent to portal for Act 250 submissions). There is nothing more that we need to do at this time re: this project.
5. Municipal Planning Grant: Matthew Bachler is coming to the next meeting. He is also going to help us with the planning grant for the new town plan, which has a November deadline. We will put him at the top of the May Agenda
6. Old Business: We left off that people would look in Town Hall looking for equipment, microphones and an amp/speaker? We couldn't find this equipment. Brian Case had bought several mikes and a speaker and it amplified the voices beautifully. Someone needs to ask him where it is. Also look and could be stored in the school. Or, could use an equalizer here (treble boost. (Lester spoke with Kim who did not think that the mic and amplifier was a good solution)
7. New Business—Add rain gauge sensor and “RiverAware” and “Tempest” app issue to the next meeting's agenda.

Ash borer. Buzz met with the village park committee. Al Sands recommended training for loggers, dropping dead trees. There is also something separate from the ash borer that is killing the trees, called “ash die back. ???” The ashes are declining in general. Some trees are resilient so leave those trees up in case they can generate new resistant trees. There is control to do; the Chicago area did it. Also the spotted lantern fly is coming northward (attacking vineyards, “tree of heaven”). Asian longhorn beetle also increasing, affects maples.

8. Public Comment: None
9. Next Meeting: 7pm May 13

Adjournment. 9:10