

Worcester Planning Commission

MINUTES

March 12, 2026, 6:30pm

Town Hall

Attending: Chani Waterhouse, Rebecca Heintz, Amy Thornton, Will Baker, Bill Arrand

Housekeeping

- Chani called the meeting to order at 6:33PM
- Agenda Revisions discussed: Discussion of Act 181, Discussion of new Pavillion.

Public Comment

Will mentioned receiving an email from U-32 teachers wanting to work on a land use and carbon sequestration project. Will forwarded the email to Amy.

Chani mentioned that Jeff Boudreau from Recreation Committee invited the Planning Commission to a meeting to discuss the Vermont River Conservancy work in Worcester. We will consider it, although it is at the day and time of our PC meeting.

Approval of Minutes 2/2/26

Will moved to accept Minutes of February 2, 2026. Amy seconded. Approved.

Updates

Outreach/coordination with other Worcester groups. Amy discussed the idea with Selectboard chair John Kaeding of serving as a liaison among all town committees and boards. John thought it was a good idea and to pursue it. She also discussed with Anna Bernette, from the Emergency Management committee, who also thought it was a good idea. Amy also discussed the town's pavilion on Ladd field, and her request at Town Meeting for the Planning Commission to be included in the planning and location of the new pavilion. She will plan on attending meetings and share information about the meetings with the Planning Commissioner.

Flood byways and river corridors. Chani has discussed with John Keading about meeting with representatives of the regional planning commission regarding flood byways and river corridors at an upcoming meeting.

VT Council on Rural Development *Community Visit* request. Chani discussed that the VT Council on Rural Development will put us on their list for a meeting and community

engagement process. They met with the Selectboard in March. The Selectboard was enthusiastic about it, and submitted the request to get on the list. There will be a delay as there is a waiting list. There could be some things we could do in the meantime, like a survey, to gauge the community sentiment about housing, development, and planning. Amy discussed a generative community engagement project she has seen at a museum, allowing the community to draw/paint/describe their vision for a thriving Worcester on large surfaces, to see representations of thriving Worcester. It is one way to gather community input.

Discussion Items

Mid-point review of Town Plan – continued discussion of follow up recommendations and ideas

Act 181 and Step 2 designation. Will discussed Act 181 tiers and steps and how they relate to Worcester. The Tier 3 designation includes potentially difficult barriers to development, and it includes the northern section of Worcester in a strip along Route 12/North Branch. The tiers and rules relating to Act 181 are in draft form, and the Legislature is considering delaying implementation of this law. The Commission discussed drafting letters to send to landowners in the Tier 3 designation and discussed sending a letter commenting to the State from the Planning Commission. We will research this further and discuss at the next meeting.

Energy Plan alignment. Chani reported that Sam Lash has worked with the Energy task force to finalize a report and did a preliminary review of the entire town plan, to make sure the Energy Plan is aligned with the Town Plan. She flagged some issues in each chapter where there could be discrepancies between the energy plan and the town plan. In particular, the Route 12 scenic corridor could contain prime solar sites because it is near existing electric infrastructure. Scale is also important to consider. Commercial solar development could be appropriate but not massive.

Preparing for Plan update. In summary, the Energy Task Force will bring some recommendations about changes to the town plan to the Planning Commission, including a possible change to Goal 7 of the Plan. There are some considerations of energy and telecommunications siting within the proposed energy chapter. There is also some lack of clarity of the districts noted in the town plan that could be clearer, particularly for energy development.

Action Items

CVRPC representation. Bill is willing to continue in this role. Chani is interested in having two representatives. Rebecca is willing to attend some meetings and try to make it work with her schedule.

Chani moved to appoint Bill as our representative to CVRPC for the next 12 months, including the regional emergency management committee, municipal plan, and special projects committee. Will seconded. Approved. Rebecca will try to attend meetings of the CVRPC to see if it works with her schedule.

Next steps, future meetings and adjourn.

Future agenda items: Discuss outreach relating to Act 181; Review siting guidelines in draft energy chapter; Update on the Pavillion.

The next meeting will be April 16.

Adjourned 8:31.