

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
PUBLIC HEARING
PROPOSED TOWN PLAN
MONDAY, April 22, 2024**

APPROVED MINUTES

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

Selectboard Members: Chair Kristi Morris, Vice Chair Michael Martin, Michael Schmitt, and Tara Chase were present in-person. Heather Frahm was not in attendance.

Administration: Town Manager Jeff Mobus and Public Works Director Jeff Strong were present in-person. Planning and Zoning Administrator Chuck Wise and Library Director Sue Dowdell were present via Zoom.

School Board Liaison: Steve Karaffa was present in-person.

Public Hearing on Proposed Town Plan

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that this is the first Public Hearing on the Proposed Town Plan, noting that at previous meetings, the Board has received and reviewed the plan. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that the purpose of this public hearing is to receive public testimony on the plan. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he included the Planning Commission Report on the Proposed Town Plan, and the full text can be obtained from either the Planning and Zoning Office or the Town Clerk's Office. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that the full text and maps can also be found on the Town's homepage: www.springfieldvt.gov.

The Board and participants reviewed the Town Plan chapter by chapter and the following comments were provided:

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he included comments provided by Board Member Heather Frahm who was not able to attend, and Library Director Sue Dowdell in the meeting packet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus additionally provided an inventory of increases in the Town Plan that Larry Craft provided at the time of the meeting, noting that Larry Kraft was on the Regional Planning Commission that assisted the Springfield Planning Commission on the draft Town Plan.

Tara Chase inquired if they should have a land acknowledgement of Native Americans that were here prior to settling the area, noting that the plan does mention historical places. Tara Chase commented that she was not sure if that statement would go into the introduction or another section of the plan. Chair Kristi Morris responded that there were some references to Indigenous Americans in Chapter 2 Historic and Cultural Resources.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Chuck Wise discussed that the prior Town Plan's energy chapter was being used by reference and they are expecting updated data tables this year that will allow the Planning Commission to collaborate with Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) that will update the energy plan. Additional discussion ensued that the energy chapter was not intended to be a part of the Town Plan update and would be a freestanding document.

Larry Kraft in-person discussed in the introduction it mentions that he was a contributor to the plan as a community town planner. Larry Kraft continued that he was a contractor with the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission and his job was to solicit community input into the plan, but he didn't have direct participation in the writing of the plan. Administrator Chuck Wise personally felt that Larry Kraft provided a lot of expertise, a lot of local knowledge, and worked with various constituencies to make the plan what it is, and he felt it was important to credit him. Further discussion ensued that Administrator Chuck Wise would work with Larry Kraft to recategorize him in the acknowledgment section as he was not working specifically in the capacity of a Springfield Town Planner.

Chapter 2 - Historic and Cultural Resources

Larry Kraft commented that he reviewed the proposed plan and found a dozen or so specific references to proposed increases. Larry Kraft continued that Chapter 2 discusses achieving an increase in event participation, bringing 10% new visitors, increased cultural tourism by 10%, improve participation by 10%, attracting 10% more visitors and increase in town spending by 20%, and he inquired for the proposed increases throughout the plan how was the numerical goal determined and why 10% for an example. Larry Kraft further inquired what the current totals for these items were, for example if we have so many tourists now, what would 10% look like? How are we going to measure it and who's going to measure it? Larry Kraft suggested that those questions need to be addressed for each of the specific increases that are included in the plan. Chair Kristi Morris noted that this was also brought up by Selectboard member Heather Frahm.

Michael Schmitt (Selectboard member and former Planning Commissioner) responded that they do not have benchmarks currently, agreeing that when setting up and initiating goals like these you do have to start with the benchmarks. Michael Schmitt continued that at the time they were writing the plan they had no resources to benchmark any of that so there does need to be a plan put in place, going forward to do that. Michael Schmitt added that the percentage increases were accumulated over several towns and cities across the country who have set plans in a manner like this. Michael Schmitt discussed that these goals were selected to give them a goal to check and do a litmus test if they are correct while they are gathering the base information to understand what our current participation is. Michael Schmitt noted that there are several ways that they can monitor these goals. Michael Schmitt further added that the Chamber of Commerce right now is looking at an organization called Streetlight, who, they work with towns, municipalities, and other organizations across the country, and they do metric testing, and monitoring of traffic, both the people and vehicle traffic. Michael Schmitt further noted that point of sale (POS) systems offer metrics, as does Google, there are multiple ways that they can track this. Michael Schmitt commented that he believed this should be included

in the Town Plan so that there is something holding us accountable for the goals in the Town Plan.

Chair Kristi Morris discussed that based on the conversations regarding this topic that they might want to establish under objectives and the goals is to establish what the rate of tourism is and some of the other categories, and then what the growth might be to come afterwards. Administrator Chuck Wise responded that Michael Schmitt and the Planning Commission have expressed an interest in having accountability in this plan, as opposed to, a more aspirational document. Library Director Sue Dowdell concurred with adding an action item that they would be establishing the baselines as part of the plan.

Chapter 3 – Natural and Scenic Resources

Chair Kristi Morris noted that there were similar percentages in this chapter. Larry Kraft inquired why the specific numbers were in there and how they determined that we need 10 projects a year and three scenic preservation projects each year, noting that they could have a goal that says implement scenic preservation projects without holding themselves responsible for a specific number. Larry Kraft continued that they would need to monitor this each year, and it should be put into the plan who will define, determine, and measure these items. Michael Schmitt responded that they reached out to Black River Action Team (BRAT) and a few of the other resources around the Connecticut River and most of the information came from them, and these were aspirations that they had. Additional discussion ensued that there should possibly be verbiage in the plan that in the first year of adoption of the plan, benchmarks and guidelines are established and then revalidating those percentages after, noting that the percentages for proposed increases are throughout the document and should be addressed similarly.

Chapter 2 – Historic and Cultural Resources

Further discussion ensued that the proposed plan recommended the establishment of a Historic Preservation Review Commission on page 6 as we

have archaeological sites such as those along the Connecticut River, Eureka Road, Skitchewaug Trail Road, Crown Point Road, and Mount Ephraim that should be protected. Additional discussion ensued regarding the State's Division for Historic Preservation and their requirements, and creating an additional local Historic Preservation Commission was not a high priority for the Town at this time. The recommendation for the first bullet point, under Goals and Objectives #1:

~~“Create a Historic Preservation Review Commission to~~ Enure all known archaeological sites are excavated per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and in coordination with Vermont's Division for Historic Preservation. Coordinate development review with the State archaeologist and the Division for Historic Preservation for properties in Vermont's designated river corridors. (2024-)”

Chair Kristi Morris noted that there were references to percentages that needed to be addressed in Goals and Objectives #2 “...Increase cultural tourism by 10% yearly, improve social participation by 10%...” and “...Focus on attracting 10% more visitors and increase in-town spending by 20%.”

Chapter 3 – Natural and Scenic Resources

Chair Kristi Morris mentioned there are figures Mr. Kraft mentioned for the number of projects implemented each year and noted that there should possibly be verbiage in the plan that in the first year of adoption of the plan, benchmarks and guidelines are established and then revalidating those figures after.

Michael Martin commented on page 10 under Tactical Basin Planning, the first paragraph indicates that there is a map to the right but there is no map included there or with the accompanying maps at the back of the document that relates to drainage basins. Administrator Chuck Wise confirmed that was an error that they would strike, noting they moved all the maps to the end and attempted to remove the references previously throughout the document.

Michael Martin commented that there was a sentence after this that said the town should actively engage in watershed level planning process, particularly as

it relates to basin and inquired if that was a goal and should it be moved to the goal section of that chapter. Michael Martin noted inconsistencies of the goals and objectives section being used at the end of some of the chapters, but not all of the chapters. Administrator Chuck Wise confirmed that it was a goal and should be shifted to the end of the chapter.

Michael Martin commented that on page 12 under vernal pools, “The town should consider mapping important vernal pools known to provide critical breeding habitat to afford them protection.” seemed like another goal or action step. Michael Schmitt responded it was an objective. Michael Martin inquired if that should be pulled out and put in the end also. Chair Kristi Morris commented he was aware of the State’s initiatives to identify river corridors, wetlands, vernal pools, etc., and the Regional Planning Commission's if the bill passes will be charged with working with municipalities to determine where those are.

Doug Johnston via Zoom inquired if they were talking about a calendar year or a fiscal year and how it pertains to the plan, noting that if it's going to be something that we would have to budget for in the future it would need to be included in the fiscal plan and should be noted in the Town Plan. Chair Kristi Morris responded that there would be some items in the calendar year and some items in the fiscal year, noting this could go back to the Planning Commission for them to address if needed. Larry Kraft noted that in the introduction and implementation it says that the Selectboard would review this every December, so that would imply it is being done on a calendar year.

Michael Martin commented on page 14 Land enrolled in current use it says 44% of Springfield total land area is enrolled in Vermont's current use program, and he inquired if that adversely affects our tax income. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that it probably adversely affects our potential tax income, noting that VLCT has a legislative update meeting on Monday morning and they're talking about conserving 30% by 2030 and 50% by 2050 and how that can impact your tax receipts. Michael Martin suggested that “To plan for conservation of agricultural and forest land in the future, the Town ~~may~~ wants to map areas that are currently enrolled in Current Use.”. Michael Schmitt responded that it is not in the goals and objectives at this time, and they chose not to elevate that at this time.

Michael Martin noted that on page 16, there is a sentence just above air quality, “The Town should continue to partner with and support organizations like the Black River Action Team (BRAT) to help manage invasive species populations.”, and he inquired if that should be in our objectives and goals. Further discussion ensued that this would not be redundant to add to the goals and objectives.

Michael Martin commented that on page 17 under mineral resources, “On-site material storage and disposal shall not be permitted.”, noting that he did not see how you would have mineral resources and extraction and not have onsite material storage permitted. Michael Martin noted that they should strike that sentence. Michael Martin further noted that the entire section on mineral resources tends to have a bias against any mineral resource extraction in his interpretation of the flavor of the text.

Chapter 4 - Recreation

Chair Kristi Morris noted the figures Larry Kraft pointed out in this chapter needing to be addressed as mentioned in previous chapters. Larry Kraft confirmed and inquired if the goals and objectives are only about Town implemented activities, noting that goal one says increase activities in neighborhood parks and gardens by 15%. Larry Kraft inquired if other community organizations such as the Springfield Garden Club holding an activity should count. Larry Kraft requested more specific examples of how the 15% increase in activity would be determined and how it would be measured. Michael Schmitt responded that the Planning Commission’s intent was beyond just the Town, for the town to be conscious and to encourage activities. Further discussion ensued that it could be clarified to the Town working with our partners to provide people access to parks, gardens, etc., neighborhood areas where these activities can be held.

Library Director inquired on page 25 the last bullet for number one, the fifth arrow down, “Enhance connectivity between all parts by adding three new connections every year”, what does that mean. Chair Kristi Morris responded that the Trails Committee is working to restore some of our trails that haven't been utilized as much recently as they were in the past, and it's just trying to get

them connected. Chair Kristi Morris continued that there are some regional maps of recreation areas, and he believed the goal was to try to get that interconnectivity.

Michael Martin commented on page 25 under the goals and objectives, “Increase reoccurring public events by three per year”, and he inquired if they intended to increase the events by three every year. Michael Schmitt confirmed they meant three per year every year. Chair Kristi Morris noted this was part of the figures and percentages that they have discussed need to be addressed by establishing benchmarks. Michael Martin commented that in the goals and objectives it says to “Sustain ten (non-reoccurring) events every year.” And he inquired how they would do that if they intended to have 10 new events each year. Further discussion ensued that the word “sustain” may be inappropriate and could be replaced with “encourage and support”.

Michael Martin commented that on page 19 under Public Facilities the third paragraph, “The Town should consider financing and fundraising opportunities to either rehabilitate or replace the Community Center.”, and he inquired if they wanted to elevate that. Further discussion ensued that they have been talking about that and this should be elevated to the goals and objectives. Larry Kraft noted that there was reference to this in the first goal and objective bullet point 3 to develop a plan for a new recreational facility. Michael Martin requested they strike the narrative sentence and leave it in the goals and objectives.

Chapter 5 - Housing

Chair Kristi Morris noted that Library Director Sue Dowdell submitted some information regarding housing as well. Library Director Sue Dowdell via Zoom commented that the word “elderly” is not in current vocabulary use, and the word handicapped is not appropriate and should be “persons with disabilities” or “disabled”. Tara Chase commented that “homeless housing” should be “individuals that are experiencing homelessness” or “those that are houseless” as a more appropriate term. Chair Kristi Morris commented that the State uses the term “unhoused”.

Tara Chase commented that on page 28, there is a reference to the Springfield Family Center, potentially becoming a day shelter in the future, noting that is not going to happen. Tara Chase continued that she checked with the Executive Director (Springfield Family Center), and they requested that it not be included in the plan. Tara Chase commented that she was not sure the Family Center should be in this section as they do not do housing but provide meals. Further discussion ensued that the references for the family center in the housing portion should be stricken but that the reference for the unhoused being able to get meals from them should stay within the plan as it is an additional service for the community. Michael Schmitt suggested perhaps putting it under the health chapter.

Tara Chase commented that the plan mentions congregate shelters, noting that Springfield Supportive Housing Program (SSHP) provides resources to assist families, noting that SSHP also offers scattered site shelters, not congregate. Tara Chase continued that there are eight shelters within Springfield that they provide housing for, noting that they mentioned Pathways as the Housing First Program and she felt it would be something that's important to share in there.

Tara Chase commented that she would like to add that SSHP is the lead housing agency and that's important, because we mentioned Windham Windsor Housing trust having to use the continuum of care for the VHIP programs, which come through SSHP.

Further discussion ensued that Tara Chase and Administrator Chuck Wise would meet and discuss this section in further depth.

Tara Chase noted that Windham Windsor Housing Trust was referenced in two sections, on page 29 and page 30, and should be put together.

Further discussion ensued that the term homeless was used throughout this section and they agreed to change it to unhoused. Additional discussion ensued that the unhoused section should be moved to be after Windham Windsor Housing Trust.

Larry Kraft noted on page 32 he had comments consistent with his previous comments regarding identifying a couple numbers of neighborhoods and he

commented they should specify why those figures. Larry Kraft inquired what happens if they do not meet these goals.

Chair Kristi Morris commented on page 32 in the last bullet under number one, it says demolish dilapidated buildings with focus on distressed properties, he noted that their goal is not necessarily out of the box to demolish these properties they would prefer to have them repaired or remediated and put back on the tax rolls. Michael Martin suggested they revise that to say something along the lines of “maintain vigilance and focusing on distressed properties for either renovation or demolition”.

Michael Martin noted that Heather Frahm had a request for this chapter, in her email bullet point number two regarding housing, she would like to add “work with the Springfield Housing Authority to finalize South Street and Southview housing opportunities.”, noting if they were to accommodate that it could be put as a bullet point under number two in the goals and objectives. Chair Kristi Morris commented that he would prefer to not be as specific about where to focus development opportunities and suggested to make this, “work with Springfield Housing Authority to identify neighborhood opportunities for development of housing.”.

Further discussion ensued that the understanding is having items in the Town plan elevates the potential for grant funding.

Additional discussion ensued to word this as “Supporting Springfield Housing Authority and other developers to identify and develop more housing that is affordable or fair market rent, for example South Street and Southview.”.

Library Director Sue Dowdell discussed that Springfield Housing Unlimited is the other section of Springfield Housing Authority, noting it is not necessarily the subsidized housing piece.

Chair Kristi Morris noted under Springfield Housing Authority there are references to elderly, handicapped, etc. and they will need to update these terms.

Chapter 6 – Education & Childcare

Discussion ensued that the previous School District Superintendent had provided recommendations for this section, but the new School District Superintendent and the School Board had not been consulted on this section, it was decided that the School District would be given a chance to review this section and make their recommendations as their priorities were no longer in alignment with the current narrative.

Tara Chase noted that the adult learning resources in Springfield page 36 and 37 the Area Health Education Center was not listed in there and was an important adult service support that they should add and in childcare Springfield Area Parent Child Center is not listed in there, nor is the All for One program or the Space Collaborative.

Chapter 7 - Transportation

Tara Chase noted a grammatical error on page 40 under condition assessment “...Town Manager schedule ~~paving~~ **paving** projects using the road surface management system...”. Chair Kristi Morris pointed out the road surface management system should be capitalized.

Tara Chase commented on page 44 under public transport it mentions towns but then it says Okemo Mountain, so she suggested striking that.

Tara Chase inquired if they should mention that the non-emergency medical transportation is provided to eligible Medicaid clients was through the Springfield Fire Department or whoever it is through. Chair Kristi Morris responded that they only transport if there is a medical need, noting that he believed this was all under the Moover.

Tara Chase commented that on page 46 under transportation system, “The existing transportation systems in Springfield is generally adequate to support the community's needs”, she suggested this statement was a big statement and she was not sure how accurate that is, noting the health needs assessment that the Blueprint project created this year, it does not support that statement.

Michael Martin inquired if on page 46 and 47 the implementation matrix was reviewed by the Department of Public Works and the Town Manager prior to inclusion in the report and if it complies with the RSMS.

Further discussion ensued that they had previously discussed reigning in some of the loftier goals through the plan.

Michael Martin noted that Toonerville Trail perhaps should be under recreation and the water projects listed there should be in the infrastructure. Further discussion ensued that this section should be reviewed by Public Works, the Water Department, and the Town Manager. Jules O'guin via Zoom responded that the Toonerville Trail is transportation because if the long-term goal is for that to become a bicycle path that goes all the way through town, then it will be used for transportation for bicycles. Chair Kristi Morris noted that it was also funded by the VTrans Municipal Assistance Program. Jules O'Guin noted that they did not want non-motorized traffic to be minimized or disparaged because it is a valid form of transportation.

Chapter 8 - Aviation

Tara Chase discussed that on page 51 part of the goals and objectives "partner was the youth aeronautics training program", she was not aware that we had that program and suggested it was also included in the education chapter. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if it was through the Civil Air Patrol. Michael Schmitt confirmed and added that it is a full STEM program. Discussion ensued that they should look at that again to better define it, noting that there is a weeklong camp with this program.

Chapter 9 - Utilities and Facilities

Library Director Sue Dowdell requested an opportunity to work with Administrator Chuck Wise to update the library piece between pages 53 and 54 because some of the items are outdated.

Tara Chase commented on page 52 that they break down how many employees are working at the Police Department, noting it was not done for the other

departments, suggesting that it be broadened to be more flexible (adequately staffed). Jules O'Guin requested that they keep the reference to the Animal Control Officer in there as this is a new position.

Chapter 10 - Economic Development

Chair Kristi Morris noted the request from Heather Frahm regarding the Parks and Woolson on page 70, suggesting changing it to "such as" to broaden the development opportunities.

Larry Kraft commented on page 70 that the reference to 500,000 square feet, was the reference a total increase or an annual increase. Michael Schmitt responded he believed it was total. Larry Kraft commented that they should specify that.

Chair Kristi Morris noted there were other locations mentioned specifically and he was not opposed to adding Parks and Woolson.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that the issue with locating a property that is the correct size for 500,000 square was difficult because our properties are either too small or too large. Further discussion ensued that they should clarify this square footage goal to be an aggregated total.

Larry Kraft commented that on page 61 the chart on largest employers was not dated. Further discussion ensued that dates would be added to the tables to reference when the data was collected. Tara Chase requested that the tables also be put from largest to smallest. Michael Martin noted to strike Springfield Printing. Larry Kraft pointed out that if the date is included Springfield Printing would not need to be deleted. Recording Secretary Carrie Kellow noted that she attempted to get Lincoln Street's information as they are an up-and-coming employer, but a response was not received. Further discussion ensued to add the dates to the other tables in the plan.

Chapter 11 - Land Use

Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that the conservation of land could come to a point where these two goals are in objection to one another. Michael Schmitt noted that they should address in the narrative section and potentially revisit the objective.

Chair Kristi Morris noted on page 80 goals and objectives number 2 enhance conservation efforts in the fifth block down “Revise the land use development regulations to protect priority forest blocks or natural habitats”, noting that these are initiatives that are coming out of the legislation is as well.

Chapter 12 - Flood Resilience

Chair Kristi Morris noted that there are legislative initiatives coming down the pike on flood resiliency.

Chair Kristi Morris noted that Heather Frahm had commented about the Police Radio tower which she would follow up with Administrator Chuck Wise and to discuss electrical needs downtown, noting that is something they are working on to ensure that we have adequate infrastructure for expansion. Further discussion ensued that this could be included in the energy chapter and economic development.

Chapter 13 – Health

Tara Chase noted that she would like to include mentioning the social determinants of health that the VT Department of Health puts out each year on page 89, noting that they have changed the term of this. Further discussion ensued that Tara Chase would discuss this with Administrator Chuck Wise and that they would include the Springfield Family Center’s food distribution here.

Larry Kraft pointed out the School District’s Wellness Committee was mentioned, and they should check to make sure this was still active. School Board Liaison Steve Karaffa responded that this was on hold as they were waiting on information regarding this initiative from the State. Further discussion ensued that they would leave this reference.

Chapter 14 - Implementation and Relationship to other Plans

No additional input for this chapter.

No further discussion. The Public Hearing was closed at 7:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary