



Town of Whitingham Planning Commission

MINUTES OF TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2026

These Minutes will be accepted into the public record (with corrections noted) at a future Planning Commission meeting.

Attending

Brad Lackey (Chair)
Peter Barus (Clerk)
Keith Thompson
Phil Edelstein

Gig Zboray (ZA)

Margo Ghia (WRC)

Emily Carris Duncan (Vt. Rep.)

Allan Twitchell

Jessica Gibb-Buursma

Emily Obringer

Joy Powell

Howard A. Dix

Diane M. Cummings

Sheldon Dix

Aysa Walstrom

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm.

Additions or Changes to Agenda

(None)

Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)

(None)

PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE PROPOSED UPDATE TO THE TOWN PLAN

Everyone introduced themselves.

Ms. Ghia reviewed the Town Plan update process, a cycle of monthly public meetings to review the previous Town Plan (2018) by chapter, to update data, policies and actions; mostly dealing with old data; few policy changes, some items removed when accomplished, and updating some sections (such as environmental justice) as required; and explained that a Town Plan is not regulatory, more of a roadmap for how the town might proceed for the next eight years; that Policies or Actions are recommendations, nonbinding and nonregulatory; and that binding regulations such as zoning regulations are not part of a Town Plan.

Mr. Edelstein discussed subject matter, different from 15-20 years ago, and includes new information important to the Town's future.

Hear comments/concerns/suggestions from the public including abutting towns

Q: Is the Plan Influenced because of "Rural Vermont Rising"?

Ms. Ghia: RVR is a large public response to changes proposed for Act 181 (and Act 250) related to Land Use maps that Rural Planning Commissions are required to provide, similar to proposed Land Use maps for each town, but at regional scale;

proposed updates were to have similar categories among regions statewide; a large contingent (of the public) was not comfortable with some of the categories, particularly Conservation Lands and Rural Areas; the Legislature repealed some sections from Act 181 (as relating to Act 250);

Ms. Ghia again noted that there are no binding or regulatory actions tied to town or regional plans, and regional plans are also visionary; guidelines; that regulation (e.g. Zoning and Act 250) is a separate process from the Town or Regional Plan; that since Act 181 was proposed, the Planning Commission had worked to keep abreast of legislative actions (such as) some updates to the proposed Land Use Maps (to include less Conservation and Rural Land), mainly privately owned areas currently under development; that the Planning Commission held discussions with individuals at the regular public meetings; and that residents are more affected by Zoning Regulations.

Q: What about Tier 1, 2, etc.?

Ms. Ghia noted that this is not part of these maps; that most Tier 2 areas are in larger towns (Brattleboro, Bellows Falls).

Ms. Zboray explained "Village Area" and "Designated Village," related to tax credits.

Ms. Ghia: Maps designed not specific to parcels; not regulatory; not following boundary lines;

Q: Due date?

Mr. Lackey explained the process, of public meetings, that Selectboard meetings are another opportunity for public input before adoption of the Plan.

Ms. Ghia noted that a public Planning Commission hearing is a chance for people to express concerns and ask questions; and if no substantive changes are made to the document, the PC can proceed to Warn and continue the process with the Selectboard; that if there are changes such as policy amendments, the PC would meet again.

Q: It would be handy if the changes to existing Plan were published.

Ms. Zboray noted that the document is always made available online and on paper.

There was further discussion on the non-regulatory nature of a Town Plan.

Q: Trying to control people's property.

There was further discussion of regulations vs. Town Plans; the role of a Planning Commission; methods and means of implementation;

Rep. Carris-Duncan suggested creation of a liaison position to coordinate with state legislators about policy recommendations.

There was discussion of dissemination of copies of the Town Plan.

Hear comments/corrections from Planning Commission members

Mr. Thompson noted remaining changes needed, e.g., history table dates and "Recreational resources should be enjoyed by the public."

Discuss next steps for adoption

Ms. Ghia discussed general next steps; once recommended to the Selectboard there should be at least 15 days' notice for the Public Hearing; that the two options are (1) choose to have another PC meeting to review changes before recommending to the Selectboard; or (2) choose to recommend after this meeting's updates; noting that any

additions, etc. can be brought to the (ensuing) Selectboard meeting; and that changes may not be made between notice of recommendation and the Public Selectboard Hearing. Ms. Ghia will correct the typos and formatting issues and provide an final draft for the PC to review, it will then be forwarded to the Selectboard with a recommendation that they adopt the plan after their public hearing process.

Mr. Barus moved to submit the Town Plan as corrected to the Selectboard for their hearing process, seconded by Mr. Edelstein, all in favor

Review and accept the Minutes of August 6, 2026

Mr. Thompson moved to accept the Minutes for August 6, 2026, seconded by Mr. Barus, all in favor.

Other business

(None heard)

Adjournment

Mr. Lackey moved to Adjourn, seconded by Mr. Thompson, all in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Clerk