

**Town of Brookline Planning Commission
Minutes**

Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 6:00 PM
At Town Office and via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

In Person: Donald Woodford (DW), Chair; Mike DeSocio (MD); Stanley Noga, Jr., (SN);

Via Zoom: Leah Daly (LD), Jon Harris (JH)

Members of the Public: None

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 PM by Chair, Donald Woodford. DW noted the meeting was being recorded.

DW reviewed the agenda and posting of materials and access to posting sites, which were cleared.

LD noted she was able to re-access the meeting after being unable to enter briefly.

SN and DW reviewed correspondence from Matt Bachler (Windham Regional Commission (WRC)).

MD asked what the Planning Commission would provide for the next Select Board (SB) meeting. DW confirmed we will need a resolution from the SB to confirm they support the application for the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG). The Commission agreed that part of the resolution is the SB agreeing to support 10% of the total costs. The total budget is \$18,500 and the Town would be required to pay approximately \$1,850.

MD asked who is signing the application. DW noted we need to name signers to the application, including an authorizing official, DW would also sign as Planning Commission chair.

MD asked to also send the full application to the SB.

DW noted that no unannounced members of the of the public were present.

LD noted that the minutes are not yet prepared and will be provided shortly. DW and LD noted that there are AI agents in Zoom that can support minutes. LD does not have access to it. LD offered to look into third-party transcription if it was difficult to activate the Zoom function.

LD explained how to enable it as the host. SN and DW looked into it and enabled transcription.

MPG Application

DW noted that the application was converted into a Google Doc to facilitate the responses. His intent is to review all responses, starting with Section 4 and returning to Section 2, which includes summary material and should be completed at the end.

Section 4

DW provided a high-level review, noting feedback from Matt Bachler was layered in to several sections.

Section 3

MD noted a question on Sec 3.3 notes if the municipality has an unconfirmed plan, as the municipality voted on an annual or special meeting to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes. The Town will plan to budget as needed for the application; however, the Committee confirmed that the existing Brookline plan is “confirmed” not “unconfirmed” making the question not applicable.

Section 4

In section 4.4, Matt suggested we write up prior work we had completed related to surveys. DW reviewed the content he drafted. Everyone agreed to the content, as written. DW noted that no detail was added on the live sessions conducted for the MTAP grant process. DW noted that the Hazard Mitigation Plan also referred to another survey process. The Commission discussed a process that was conducted in September/October of 2023 to support Hazard Mitigation Planning.

SN offered to locate copies of the discussed Hazard Mitigation Plan survey. SN noted that he thought Margot Ghia of Windham Regional Commission may have participated in that process as well. SN reviewed some of the workload at that time that fell to the SB.

JH asked whether it is important to note there are only 502 people in the town and approximately 3000 properties. LD noted the 2020 census noted 540 people in the town or 7.8% of the town that responded to the survey.

Sec 4.5 is N/A.

Section 5

DW noted that additional feedback from Matt had been added to the response, including LD noted that she had reached out to Innerfire who would be supportive of participation in the process. Mike agreed to reach out to Dutton Farm for support as well.

Section 6

DW provided an overview of the content and the Commission re-read the section. SN sent some references from the Hazard Mitigation Plan to LD and DW noted those comments were incorporated.

DW reviewed the 14 statewide planning goals and noted that the main goal we are working toward is related to flood resiliency and exploring zoning and land use. We are not looking for more building but to ensure any new building does not exacerbate.

JH requested to review Section 1 related to goals and the Commission discussed the goals and how they are laid out in statute. DW clarified where in statute the list of goals starts within the statute (Title 24, Chapter 117, Subchapter 001).

The Commission reviewed Sections 6.1 through 6.3. This project supports various goals, particularly climate resiliency and flood recovery (Act 47 and 181). Lastly, it is intended to support communities of all ages identified in Age Strong Vermont.

Act 47 is specifically related to town villages and more municipal locations. Act 181 adjusted Act 250. DW noted Act 181 allocated geographic areas into Tier 1 through 3. Tier 2 is status quo under Act 250. Tier 1 are areas designated by state that remove barriers to develop housing, including areas with existing infrastructure for housing. Tier 1 is very limited in Windham County. Tier 1 splits into 1a and 1b, with 1a being similar to the downtown of Brattleboro. It is intended to encourage density in these areas and villages. Tier 3 is places designated as critical resource areas so there is greater review of development. For example, this would be the mountain in Brookline and would warrant even further protection under Act 250. Matt will be further reviewing this section.

DW noted that we should get the five points related to climate resilience and we have credibility due to completion of the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The Commission discussed adding attachments to the application. MD suggested including the Hazard Mitigation Plan but DW also noted the training guidance was not to include additional large documents.

The Commission discussed incorporating additional edits from Matt as they are available as well as the quality of the application.

DW discussed the impact of aging in place as part of the Age Strong agenda and our application.

SN asked about including some additional points from hazard mitigation plans and some of the work recently completed in the Town. He also noted presence of invasive species as a regular concern raised within the town, commenting that these concerns could also be raised in this application as they were raised in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. DW agreed to discuss in more depth offline, if needed.

The Commission discussed the presence of invasive knotweed. LD noted it can worsen flooding as well as overrun native plants. LD noted that it contributes to worsening erosion and can compromise road and other structures.

Section 8

DW noted that this relates to naming specific accountable individuals for the application.

The Commission reviewed the budget again, and DW noting we are asking \$16,818, with the balance (\$1,682) provided by the Town. The Commission discussed what the 10% requirements would be. The Town must also be in good standing with various state agencies, including the Agency of Natural Resources. Commission members noted the town was in good standing, though SN noted he has not seen documentation to that effect.

JH asked why we are not asking for \$20,000, which is the maximum? DW clarified that the maximum is \$30,000. The Commission discussed the strategy or thinking that went into this particular amount. DW reviewed how we developed a realistic budget. The Commission noted we are being realistic in our approach and WRC support on costs adds to credibility.

The Commission reviewed what happens if the Town goes over or under the budget. Matt provided guidance on how to come up with the budget. MD noted that as the potential consultant he would be required to stay in budget.

The Commission reviewed use of New England Municipal Resources Center accounting and listers and assessors' systems as the formal systems as the application requires use of appropriate systems.

DW noted that adoption of any bylaws or zoning requirement would be a separate process following adoption of Town Plan. When connecting with Matt, he indicated these would be areas to focus on in the Town Plan.

Section 2

The Commission reviewed Section 2, which provides an overall summary. SN noted that he reviewed grant awards back to 2012, noting that Brookline had only received one grant (around 2017). Essentially Brookline hasn't been funded in a long time compared to other towns.

SN, DW and MD discussed final preparation for the SB of these and other materials. MD requested materials by Monday. SN noted the process for sharing materials with the Town Clerk.

LD and SN discussed how to obtain the transcription. LD also thanked DW for gathering together the materials and the Commission expressed its thanks. JH noted it looks very professional, cohesive and comprehensive.

Hearing no other business, DW adjourned the meeting at 7:40.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leah Daly, Secretary