

Town of Vershire Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Special Topics Forum: Economic Development, 2/22/23 at 7-9pm at the Town Center
There will be a remote option for this meeting via Zoom or by phone.

Attendance: Gregory Wilson-co-chair, Eleanor Zue-co-chair, Justin Will, Robert Perkins, Nate Thames, Aaron Hoopes-development administrator, and Gretchen Harvey-secretary. Invited Guests: Carl Demrow-Representative from Orange County, Erika Hoffman-Kiess-GMEDC (Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation); Members of the Public: there were approximately 4 residents in person and another 8 joined the meeting via Zoom.

Advice from Professionals:

- Do the work now to figure out priorities (including housing) and plan accordingly for future development so we are ready when the funding is available.
- Create asset inventories: green fields, undeveloped lands, shared housing options, trail networks and options, town forest land, conserved land, etc; continue the survey work begun within the Village District assessing goals and possibilities within the district.
- Inventory the existing assets (pavilion, pizza oven, skating rink, sense of community, TCBuilding, town committees, existing trails, etc) and make plans to maximize these assets in the short term, while working on longer term goals.

Funding options:

- Erika (GMEDC) has a list of resources and can also sift through other lists to try to match goals to funding streams (including trail development). Also see the GMEDC website.
- Competitive grants can be challenging for small towns to get because they tend to favor projects that impact the greatest # of people. Keep sending this message to elected reps.
- The new funding that is coming (in addition to existing funding) will go to “shovel-ready” projects or plans that are ready to be implemented. Elected reps are getting the message that small towns need help (human resources) to get these projects ready and for putting together and administering grant applications.
- Tax increment financing might be a process not necessarily to adopt but to look at (Hartford) to consider what kinds of investments might benefit Vershire’s tax base.

Questions Raised:

- What are the impacts of Act 250 on Vershire’s development goals? (The law may be changing)
- Does Vershire currently restrict the locations of commercial enterprises?
- Does increasing the number of commercial properties help the tax base?
- How do home businesses (including farm-based) impact the community (taxes or otherwise)?

Suggestions:

- Brick and mortar businesses on 113 where residents can interact
- Trail networks that are well marked (and expanded)

- More walkability within the Village District
- More parking within the Village District
- Quality broadband for all
- Lower speed limits within the Village District
- Safer crossing and a river bridge linking town buildings and Church/Orr Bldg
- Welcoming signage and marketing (local assets and products) materials
- More events such as farmers markets, fun runs, community meals, etc.
- New town office
- Commercial kitchen certification for the TCB kitchen
- Networking lunches in the TCB for remote workers and home businesses
- Beautification efforts such as tree planting or other
- A new Green Book with expanded information about Vershire.
- Tap into Rivendell HS student service requirements

Questions not considered:

- How might climate disasters and migration pressures impact the character of the town; are there ways to be welcoming and intentional about expansion at the same time?
- How might Vershire plan for a rapid influx of new residents all at once?
- How will the Town Plan strike a balance between the polar ends of the development spectrum, i.e. between unregulated expansion and outdated or discriminatory restrictions?