

**Approved
Minutes
Hartford Planning Commission
November 13, 2023**

**THIS MEETING WAS CONDUCTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH
THE VERMONT OPEN MEETING LAW
IN PERSON WITH ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION AVAILABLE**

Present: John Reid, Chair, Bruce Riddle, Vice Chair, Toby Dayman, Dillon Bianchi, John Heath, Colin Butler, Dylan Kreis, Kim Souza, Selectboard Liaison, and Jo-Ann Ells, Zoning Administrator

Absent: None

Administrative Matters

1. Public Comment

None.

2. Minutes

Colin Butler moved to approve the minutes of October 16, 2023. John Heath seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

John Reid read the Hybrid Meeting Script and took a roll call.

3. Administrative Permits

- Casella – Woodstock Road, 2,800 sq. ft. canopy structure with a roof
- Snow Village Condos.- Williams Lane- two decks

John Reid asked if there were any questions about the administrative permits. There were none.

4. Act 250 Applications

- Black Rock Investments, LLC, Jurisdictional Opinion
- Clay- Route 14 Farm Structure

John Reid asked if there were any questions. Toby Dayman asked what a “Jurisdictional Opinion” was. Earl Simpson, of Black Rock Investments and The Simpson Company explained that it is when an applicant asks if their project will require an Act 250 permit.

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5. Town Plan Steering Committee Update

Bruce Riddle noted that the Town Plan Steering Committee met on November 9, 2023.

6. Regional Planning Commission Update

Bruce Riddle noted that there was nothing substantive to report from the last Regional Planning Commission meeting.

7. Climate Action Plan Update

John Reid stated that the solar project on Braley Drive had been granted a “Preferred Site” designation by the Public Utility Commission.

8. Availability for the next Public Hearing

All Commissioners anticipated being available for the December 18, 2023 Hearing.

Public Hearing

John Reid opened the Public Hearing, asked people to sign in, explained the Hearing process and Interested Party Rule, noted that the Commission may alter the order of the agenda, and administered the oath.

John Reid moved to rearrange the agenda and open the Hearings on the four applications by Black Rock Investments (#23-22, #-23-23, #23-24, and #23-25). Bruce Riddle moved to continue the applications by Black Rock Investments to 6PM, Monday, December 4, 2023. Colin Butler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

1. Application #23-17 by Kyle Moses and Crystal Pearson-Moses(owners/applicants) for Site Development Plan Approval under section 260-45 of the Hartford Zoning Regulations for a third dwelling unit, lot 45-0028-000, 186 Hillcrest Terrace, White River Junction, in a R-2 zoning district.

Crystal Pearson-Moses introduced herself and gave an overview of the application and recent construction. She stated that she understands that the single-unit dwelling and garage must be connected for the Commission to consider the project a multi-unit building and suggested that the buildings are already connected by a patio and underground utilities.

She submitted a sketch of the property, photographs, and appraisal of her property. She explained that she obtained a grant for the new units, that the rent will have to remain affordable for a period of five years, and that adding a deck between the structures would be expensive and require excavation. She explained that she has obtained State permits for the project.

Colin Butler asked about changes to Act 47 and multi-unit housing. Jo-Ann Ells explained that the Town must allow multi-unit dwellings with four or fewer units to be a permitted use (the town cannot designate them as conditional uses).

Toby Dayman commented that the structures need to be physically connected. Crystal Pearson-Moses noted that, as previously stated, she believes they are already connected.

John Reid suggested that the units in the garage be combined. Crystal Pearson-Moses noted that the size of Accessory Dwelling Units is limited, and having two separate units will provide more housing.

It was suggested that the Planning Commission could approve the application on the condition that the applicant submits a plan and a deadline to connect the buildings.

Colin Butler asked if the patio was a structure. Jo-Ann Ells explained that patios are not considered structures and Zoning Permits are not required to build a patio.

Crystal Pearson-Moses stated that the garage can accommodate 4 vehicles and there is ample parking in the driveway and on a lot she owns across the street.

John Heath commented that based on his experience as a builder, he did not think the patio would need to be completely removed in order to construct a deck as excavation could be limited to that required for sonnet tubes.

Paul Martorano, of Windsor/Windham Housing Trust, voiced support for the project.

Bruce Riddle moved to close the Public Hearing. Colin Butler seconded, and the Public Hearing was closed.

Colin Butler moved to approve the application with the conditions as discussed. Bruce Riddle seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Application #23-18 by Schaal Real Estate Revocable Trust (owners/applicants) for approval of a Subdivision involving boundary line adjustments between lots 22-0250-000 and 22-0251-000, 61 and 73 Depot Street, Wilder, in VRC and R-1 zoning districts.

Tim Schaal was present and gave a brief overview of the application. He noted the lot line adjustment would allow more flexible uses for 61 Depot Street in the future.

Toby Dayman confirmed the effect on parking.

There was no public comment.

Colin Butler moved to close the Public Hearing. Bruce Riddle seconded, and the Public Hearing was closed.

Bruce Riddle moved to approve the application as submitted. Dylan Kreis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Application #23-19 by 474 Hartford Ave. LP and Twin Pines Housing Trust (owners/applicants) for Site Development Plan Approval under section 260-45 of the Hartford Zoning Regulations for an amendment to an approved multi-unit dwelling to allow temporary construction access on Goudreau Street, lot 43-0074-001, 747 Hartford Avenue, Wilder, in a Planned Development.

Nate Stearns, Andrew Winter, Dave Ormiston, Adam Morse, Doug Sonsalla, and Jeff Ingram were present.

Nate Stearns gave an overview of the project noting the Commission approved it in 2022 and it was currently under construction. He explained that the applicant was seeking changes to the phasing related to construction access on Hartford Avenue and Goudreau Street. He distributed three plans depicting the flow of traffic for each of the three phases of construction and reviewed the plans.

John Reid asked about the two sets of blue lines. Nate Stearns noted that they depict parking by people going to The Haven and St Paul's Church, not construction vehicles.

Nate Stearns confirmed that the access on Goudreau Street would be gated and limited to emergency vehicles after construction of the project is complete.

Colin Butler noted that while he did not object to the application, he wanted to be assured that parking would not occur on Goudreau Street.

John Heath commented that he has seen parking occur on Goudreau Street.

Nate Stearns stated that a "no right turn" sign would be installed at the Goudreau Street exit.

Dillon Bianchi commented that he was concerned with damage to Goudreau Street from construction vehicles.

Leslie Black of Wilder Street and Saint Paul's Church voiced support for the application.

Michael Redmond, Upper Valley Haven, voiced support for the application and noted it was imperative that The Haven be able to use off-site parking on the lot as previously approved.

Marie Alvin of Demers Avenue expressed frustration with construction traffic on Demers Avenue and Goudreau Street and parking on Goudreau Street.

Lind Miller of Miller Road agreed with the concerns expressed regarding construction traffic on the side roads and noted that she understood that there is a safety issue to address.

Heidi Duto of Christian Street stated that she agreed with the concerns expressed by Dillon Bianchi and suggested that the Haven park at the former “Montshire” property which they own.

Bruce Riddle moved to close the Public Hearing. Colin Butler seconded, and the Public Hearing was closed.

John Reid suggested a condition be added to prohibit parking on Goudreau Street and Demers Avenue. Dillon Bianchi added that the gate on Goudreau Street should remain closed when not actively in use.

Bruce Riddle moved to approve the application with the noted changes. Dylan Kreis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The Commission took a five minute break.

4. Application #23-20 by Northern Stage Company (owners/applicants) for Site Development Plan Approval under section 260-45 of the Hartford Zoning Regulations for 18 dwelling units in three Multi-Unit Buildings, lots 45-0150-000, 45-0151-000, and 45-0152-000, 140, 146, 160 and 178 Gates Street, White River Junction, in CB and Design Review Districts.

Jason Smoller, Jim Pulver, Adam Morse, and Jim Lynch were present.

Jason Smoller explained that it is difficult to find rental housing for Northern Stage artists and employees so Northern Stage is seeking approval to build 18 dwelling units. He noted that the Commission had recently approved a larger project and that this submittal was scaled back from that plan.

Jim Pulver shared and narrated a video depicting the project.

Jim Pulver reviewed the layout of the project, and shared color samples of the façade and an example of the asphalt roofing. He noted that landscaping plans had been submitted.

John Reid asked the applicant to define what they meant by “modern Vermont vernacular” and “relatable conclusion” in their narrative. Jim Pulver reviewed the details of the structures and how they represent simple details often seen in Vermont structures. He reviewed the existing development on Gates Street and how it is related to the proposed buildings.

John Reid questioned what the applicant meant by “the drainage system has been designed to attenuate the design storm.” Adam Morse explained that the post

development stormwater runoff would be less than the pre-development conditions and gave an overview of the stormwater design.

Colin Butler commented that the project seems to be the definition of “Vermont vernacular” and noted that he preferred this design to the previous. He questioned if the proposed public pocket park would remain public. Jim Pulver stated it was the applicant’s intention to allow the public to use the pocket park, but that if it is misused that could change. Colin Butler commented that he’d prefer problems be resolved rather than not allowing the public to use the pocket park.

Colin Butler asked if the applicant would be vacating existing rental units as previously proposed. Jason Smoller stated that they would be vacating 15 rental units.

Colin Butler suggested the applicant consider standing seam roofing with varied colors.

It was noted that the original application had been withdrawn.

Adam Morse reviewed how melting snow would be managed.

Jason Smoller noted that he had spoken with the adjacent property owner to the east who had expressed concern with the previous application.

John Heath commented that 178 Gates Street should be checked for asbestos before it is removed. Jason Smoller confirmed that an assessment would be done.

Jim Pulver confirmed that the project would meet the Vermont Energy Code.

Toby Dayman stated that he would like the applicant to plant an additional shade tree by the public sidewalk and to find a more appropriate shade tree in this location than the proposed Hop Horn Beam.

Toby Dayman questioned the placement of two lights near the outdoor area in the back of the project.

Toby Dayman stated that he believed a vehicle could not exit parking space #16 and therefore it should be removed.

Jason Smoller noted that there is on-street parking and municipal parking for visitors and typically one in five artists have vehicles.

Dylan Kreis asked about the removal of the garage. Jo-Ann Ells confirmed that it is a contributing structure in the Historic District, its removal had been approved by the Design Review Committee, and it was previously approved by the Planning Commission to be removed in the prior application.

Bruce Riddle asked about maintenance of the stormwater infiltration chamber. It was agreed that a maintenance plan should be submitted.

John Reid noted he had some concern with the proposed fire pit in a public place. Jason Smoller explained that it would not be a gas fueled structure, but a wood burning structure. He noted that Northern Stage is discussing how it will be managed.

Noting the steepness of the bank in the back of the lot, it was agreed that the applicant should be required to have an engineer talk to their forester about bank stability during/after construction.

John Reid asked for public comment.

Marie Alvin, Demers Aveue, commented that it was a nice project and fit into the character of the area.

Scott Snyder, Fairview Terrace, voiced support for the project.

The Commission discussed requiring the applicant to install EV charging conduit to all of the parking spaces.

Bruce Riddle moved to close the Public Hearing. Dylan Kreis seconded, and the Public Hearing was closed.

The Commission reviewed changes to the draft Findings of Fact.

Bruce Riddle moved to approve the application with the noted changes. Colin Butler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously

5. Application #23-21 by Craftstudies Inc. (owner) and The Upper Valley Haven (applicant) for Site Development Plan Approval under section 260-45 of the Hartford Zoning Regulations for an Emergency Shelter, lot 45-0003-000, 608 North Main Street, White River Junction, in the HCR Zoning District.

Noting the late hour, John Reid asked the applicant if they preferred to open the Public Hearing with the understanding that it would likely be continued, or continue the Hearing.

Kim Butler requested that the Commission continue the Hearing.

Bruce Riddle moved to continue the application to the Commission's scheduled meeting of December 18, 2023. Colin Butler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

At 9:15 p.m., Toby Dayman moved to adjourn. Dylan Kreis seconded, and the Hearing

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was adjourned.

Respectively Submitted,



Toby Dayman, Clerk

Planning Commission

John Reid 01-11-24

John Heath 03-22-24

Toby Dayman 06-28-24

Colin Butler 07-12-24

Bruce Riddle 02-07-25

Dillon Bianchi 09-05-25

Dylan Kreis 6/26/2026