

APPROVED
Minutes
Hartford Planning Commission
March 31, 2025

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

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

Absent: None

John Reid read the hybrid meeting script, and took a roll call.

Administrative Matters

1. Public Comment

None

2. Elect Officers

Colin Butler moved to reappoint John Reid as Chair, Bruce Riddle as Vice Chair, and Toby Dayman as Clerk. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Bliss Road Tower Replacement Update

Jo-Ann Ells explained that the applicant was preparing a visual analysis and that the Planning Commission and Selectboard would have 30 days to review it once it was received.

4. Minutes

Bruce Riddle moved to approve the minutes of February 24, 2025. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5. Administrative Permits

Jo-Ann Ells noted that an administrative permit had been issued for rePlay Arts at 87 Maple Street in a space previously occupied by a ballet studio.

6. Act 250 Applications

None

7. Town Plan Steering Committee update

Bruce Riddle shared that the Planning Department has recently hired a new Housing and Development Specialist, and it is expected that workshops for the housing section of Town Plan will be scheduled soon.

8. Regional Planning Commission update

Bruce Riddle noted he expected the new land use maps to be ready in October per the RPC's website.

9. Climate Action Plan update

John R. shared that the Climate Action Committee is reviewing the Climate Action Plan given the possibility that funding could be lost/cut back.

10. Next Public Hearing

It was noted that the Planning Commission's May 5, 2025 was cancelled as no applications were submitted.

Public Hearing

John Reid opened the Public Hearing, explained the Hearing process, interested party rule, and administered the oath.

1. Application #25-04 by Richard and Paula Smardon (owners/applicants) for approval of a boundary line adjustment between lots 02-0113-000 and 02-0113-001, 4531 and 4533 Quechee West Hartford Road, West Hartford, in a RL-1 zoning district.

Skip Nalette of Pathways Consulting was present.

Skip gave an overview of the project noting that the properties were developed and under the same ownership.

Toby Dayman asked if the right-of-way was existing. Skip Nalette confirmed the right-of-way is existing.

There was no public comment.

Bruce Riddle moved to close the Public Hearing. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the Public Hearing was closed.

Dillon Bianchi moved to approve the application as presented. Bruce Riddle seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Application #25-05 by Robert Wetzel, Brenda Mainer, and Quechee Webster LLC (owners/applicants) for approval of a boundary line adjustment between lots 12-0185-000 and 12-0186-000, 0 and 1453 Quechee Hartland Road, Hartford, in a RL-3 zoning district.

Robert Wetzel, Brenda Mainer, and Jason Crance were present.

Jo-Ann Ells noted that applicant's properties extended into the Town of Hartland, and that the application before the Planning Commission was limited to the land in Hartford.

Jason Crance gave an overview of the project and noted that the result would be a buffer for the Wetzel/Mainer property from planned silvicultural activities by Quechee Webster.

Dylan Kreis asked about the approval process in Hartland. Jason Crance noted that he was not the attorney presenting the boundary line adjustment in Hartland, and stated that it was his understanding that a Public Hearing was not required, and the process involved a simple exchange of deeds.

Steven George asked for a summary about the reason for the proposed application. Jason Crance stated that the exchange of land would result in a buffer for the Wetzel/Mainer property from planned silvicultural activities by Quechee Webster.

John Reid noted that the application before the Planning Commission was for a boundary line adjustment and not silvicultural activity.

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

Colin Butler moved to approve the application as presented. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Application #25-06 by WEH Holdings, LLC and William Harris (owners/applicants) for approval of the subdivision of lot 13-0037-004 into two lots, 5580 Woodstock Road, Quechee, in an approved Planned Development.

Will Harris was present. He gave a brief overview of the application and noted it was his intent to build a home for himself on the 8 acre lot.

Jo-Ann Ells explained that the property is governed by a Master Plan for an approved Planned Development (PD) including the lot.

Colin Butler asked if there was anything in the PD that would preclude the application. Jo-Ann Ells confirmed there was not anything in the PD that would preclude the application.

Toby Dayman reviewed the building envelopes.

Dylan Kreis asked if the applicant was aware of the traffic volume on Route 4. Will Harris confirmed that he was aware of the traffic.

There was no public comment.

Colin Butler moved to close the Public Hearing. John Heath seconded, and the Public Hearing was closed.

John Heath moved to approve the application as presented. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the motion passed 5-2 with John Heath and Dylan Kreis opposed as they did not agree that the application met sections §200-2 D or §200-2 E of the Subdivision Regulations.

4. Application #25-07 by Zi Chen (owner/applicant) for Site Development Plan Approval under section 260-45 of the Hartford Zoning Regulations for approval of a third dwelling unit in an existing structure, lot 22-0096-000, 238 Norwich Avenue, Wilder, in a R-1 zoning district.

Zi Chen and Max Lu were present.

Max Lu gave an overview of the application noting that there would be no change to the footprint of the structure, three 3-bedroom units were proposed, and the parking had been reviewed with Chris Holzwarth at the Department of Public Works.

John Heath thanked the applicant for proposing more housing in Wilder. He expressed concern with a driver being able to park in proposed parking space #3. Toby Dayman commented that a turning movement study may be necessary. Dillon Bianchi noted that additional dimensions were needed on the plan. Colin Butler noted that clarifying the intent of the black and blue lines on the plan would be helpful.

There was discussion about grading and drainage.

Dylan Kreis expressed concern with the limited number of parking spaces.

John Heath noted that additional landscaping should be provided.

The Commission discussed acting on the application with added conditions opposed to asking the applicant to come back before the Commission.

Dylan Kreis asked that floor plans be provided. Max Lu stated that he could provide floor plans.

Suzanne Provost introduced herself and noting that she lives on Hawthorne Street. She expressed some concern with the impact on property value, and asked that a clearer plan, additional landscaping, and plan for trash be provided.

Gaudong Fu noted that she lives at 238 Norwich Avenue and asked several questions about tenant rights. John Reid noted that the questions were outside of the Commission's authority.

Dylan Kreis noted his concern with the lack of details provided by the applicant.

Bruce Riddle moved to close Public Hearing. John Heath seconded, and the Hearing was closed.

Bruce Riddle moved to approve the application on the condition that:

- Landscaping is added to the south of parking spaces #2 & #3.
- Landscaping is replaced and added between the access drive and Norwich Avenue including screening for parking spaces #1.
- A screened trash area is added.
- More detailed information about drainage is submitted for review by the Chair of the Planning Commission and Department of Public Works.
- Verification that the Department of Public Works supports the proposed parking and circulation is submitted.
- An interior layout plan is submitted.

Colin Butler seconded, and the motion passed 5-2 with Toby Dayman and Dillon Bianchi opposed as they preferred the proposed conditions be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a Hearing.

5. Application #25-08 by Giri White River Hex Property 121 LLC (owner/applicant) for Site Development Plan Approval under section 260-45 of the Hartford Zoning Regulations for approval of the conversion of suites into single-rooms at the Holiday Inn Express and Suites, lot 14-0018-000, 121 Ballardvale Drive, Wilder, in a GCR zoning district.

Ethan McNaughton was present and gave an overview of the application and justification for reduced parking.

There was discussion about how to address parking should it be an issue including having staff carpool and adjusting shifts for staff.

Ethan McNaughton pointed out that if parking were an issue, it would only hurt the hotel owner, and they would want to address it.

Concerns were voiced regarding allowing a parking reduction without a plan to address parking if it became an issue, that the change from suites to single rooms would increase the demand for parking, current planned development/construction in the Upper Valley that may increase the demand for hotel rooms on a long term basis, and the possible impact on neighboring properties.

John Heath moved to close Public Hearing. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the Hearing was closed.

Colin Butler moved to approve the application on the condition that the applicant provides an addition eleven (11) parking spaces on-site, off-site (with applicable agreements), or a combination thereof, for review by the Chair of the Planning Commission. John Heath seconded, and the motion passed 6-1 with Dylan Kreis opposed. Dylan stated that he did not find that the application met §260-45 (1) or §260-45 (2) of the Zoning Regulations.

6. Application #25-09 by Crystal Howard (owner/applicant) for the approval of a subdivision amendment involving the removal of the requirement to install a sprinkler system in a new dwelling on lot 03-0010-006, 2111 Wildlife Road, West Hartford, in a RL-5 zoning district.

Crystal Howard and Tom Peltier, Hartford Fire Marshal were present.

Crystal Howard shared that she has never lived in a home with a sprinkler system, but understands that they save lives. She added that the construction of the dwelling has been very expensive, and she is running out of money for a septic system and cannot afford to install a sprinkler system. In addition, she is paying legal fees to try to recover money from a negligent contractor.

Tom Peltier stated that he sympathized with the landowner. He suggested she contact the State Attorney General's office regarding her problems with the contractor.

Tom Peltier noted that once a fire starts, you have 2-3 minutes to get out, the survival rate for a home with a sprinkler system is 90 % and, in this instance, it would take emergency responders 10-15 minutes to get to her house in good weather.

John Reid commented that it appeared the Zoning Permit had a condition that was ignored.

Crystal Howard noted that the dwelling is heated with a wood stove and heat pumps.

Colin Butler noted that the installation would have been much cheaper if done during construction. Crystal Howard stated that her builder failed her.

John Heath noted that while he was sympathetic, this should have been addressed before construction commenced.

Toby Dayman stated that he was not supportive of the sprinkler system policy.

Dylan Kreis noted that the waiver would increase the risk to emergency responders.

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

Dillon Bianchi moved to approve the application. Bruce Riddle seconded and the motion failed 3-4 with John Reid, Bruce Riddle, Colin Butler, and Dylan Kreis opposed.

Adjournment

At 9:30 p.m., Bruce Riddle moved to adjourn. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the Hearing was adjourned.

Respectively Submitted,



Toby Dayman, Clerk

Planning Commission Terms

Dillon Bianchi 09-05-25
Dylan Kreis 6/26/2026
John Reid 02-05-27
John Heath 03-11-27
Toby Dayman 06-24-27
Colin Butler 06-24-27
Bruce Riddle 02-03-28

