



Project Review Committee Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday November 6, 2024 at 3:00 PM
via Zoom**

Members present: Jack Cunningham (Chair), Bob Bois, Stephan Chait, Jim Pinkerton, Todd Davidson, Kathy Edgerly

Guests present: Andrea Seaton, John Goodell, Chris Boucher, Stephen Brown, Olivia, Nicole Kirouac, Richard Pizzi, Catherine Nemcheck, CJ King (Grace Cottage Hospital); Brian Bannon (Town of Brattleboro)

Staff present: Alyssa Sabetto

Called to order at 3:00pm with a quorum present and chaired by Jack Cunningham.

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

2. **Minutes**

Minutes of September 3, 2024 meeting were approved on a motion from Bob and seconds from Jim. Minutes approved as distributed.

3. **Public Comment Period**

No comments were made during this opportunity for members of the public to comment on non-agenda items.

4. **Grace Cottage Hospital expansion – Townshend – 2W0894-8**

Address: 185 Grafton Road

Land Use District: Village

Potential Policies (pages 12-51): Land Use 1, 2, Economy 2, 3, 4, Human Services 42

Background: Construction of a 21,120-sf medical office building to replace existing, outdated, hospital clinic buildings, construction of a new parking area in the general area of the existing clinic buildings to be removed, construction of an expanded parking area at the Pharmacy Building located on the west side of VT Route 35 and construction of a new utility structure to house a diesel fire pump and associated buried sprinkler system water storage tanks. The project is located at the Grace Cottage Hospital Site in Townshend, VT.

Grace Cottage (GC) has about 30,000 patient visits per year. The buildings are no longer adequate for the facility's needs. Grace Cottage received a \$5 million donation five-years ago and have been fundraising ever since to fund the expansion. They have received their Certificate of Good from the Green Mountain Care Board. They are refining some interior design choices but are set on the exterior design. Information about the renovation is at gracecottage.org.

An Act 250 incomplete letter was issued 10/30/24. John Goodell said that the public water supply permit is all that's needed at this point in terms of state ANR granted permits. GC has draft permits for the other outstanding permit needs and are working with the various ANR departments now to move them forward.

The incomplete letter also mentioned a seasonal stream not shown on project plans, but it is actually shown as a dashed line on the project plans per John pointing it out. The wetlands encompass the stream, so the wetland buffer satisfies the stream buffer. Leal has reviewed the project. GC needed to impinge on the 50' wetland buffer slightly with 10-15' reduction at points for building operation needs outside the footprint and the wetland draft permit has been given. They are entirely outside of the stream buffer. Lael will need to coordinate with John on the response.

Bob asked about the existing GC 'ambulance garage' which is in the 50' wetland buffer. John said that because it exists, they don't need to alter it or accommodate its stormwater. John clarified that they only need to address stormwater coming from new development. Bob suggested that they may want to improve the stormwater situation and not just meet minimum requirements, but he accepted they are not required to do this. The ambulance garage is now used as a storage shed.

Bob asked if the lighting plan is dark sky compliant and John said that the fixtures are all 100% downcast. Alyssa asked about communication with abutters. John said that aesthetics and noise are the chief concerns. There is a full noise study being done now. The abutters have asked for softening of views of the existing parking that could be done as part of this project. The site has limitations on what GC can grow but they are working now to enhance the landscape plan for abutters.

Alyssa asked about the growth in patients and providers as indicated in the application. John said the growth expected is modest and most of the reason for the expansion is to increase efficiency for current patient load.

Stephan asked for a description of the medical facility services. Olivia said GC's 'bread and butter' is outpatient rehab, emergency department, primary care and inpatient rehab, as well as a small number of acute patient stays. The new addition is only clinic space for office visits with a provider. The ambulance is no longer coming from Grace Cottage, primarily the ambulances come through Rescue Inc. out of their Townshend ambulance facility.

ACTION: Cathy motioned that the Committee write a letter using policies that support the project, Bob seconded. All approved, with Jack abstaining from the vote. Alyssa will draft and submit a letter.

5. Tri-Park Housing Cooperative mobile home relocation – Brattleboro – 2W0260-13

Address: 93 Mountain Home Park

Land Use District: Rural Residential/Rural Commercial

Potential Policies (pages 12-51): Land Use 2, 6, Natural Resources 9, 16, Housing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

Background: Relocation of 20 mobile homes currently located in mapped flood hazard areas. Project will include all site work, utility improvements and new units to allow up to 20 sites currently within the Flood Hazard area to be abandoned and removed. In addition, moving the maintenance shed out of floodplain and building a new one within another site within the park.

This project involves moving 20 old mobile homes out of a floodplain and wetland area. Old homes will be replaced with new energy efficient homes outside of the flood hazard area but within the Park. No net change in housing. The new home locations will be 80 feet from the ANR projected floodway and flood hazard areas, and outside of the wetland and wetland buffer.

Stephan asked about the financing of the project. Brian explained that the Town had worked with Tri-Park to do a master plan to see if the whole Park could be relocated but that move was considered cost prohibitive, so infill areas were identified instead. This current project is funded through Vermont Emergency Management's Flood Resilient Communities Fund. Stephan asked about utilities, and Brian explained that some are underground and some are overhead. Bob said that this project stands out to him because of the local support and state financing.

Brian said that the impacts of the project are very local, but the example is a good one for anywhere. Brattleboro has been using their flood resilience success stories to inspire other communities that they too can do big resilience building projects. It sets an example for the region and beyond.

ACTION: Stephan motioned that the Committee comment on the project using supportive policies from the Regional Plan. Bob seconded and all approved. Alyssa will draft and submit a letter.

6. Recent Decisions and Updates

- Proposed – Verizon co-location on the existing 98’ cell tower at 122 School Street in Readsboro (24-2853-AN)
- Culvert upgrade at the Hermitage Members Club – Wilmington – 700002-30B – permitted 9/11/2024
- Memorial Park maintenance building replacement – Brattleboro – 700023-2 – permitted 8/30/2024
- Hunter Excavating residence construction – Jamaica – 2W1364-1 – permitted 8/19/2024

7. Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Tuesday, December 3rd.

8. Adjourned at 4:03

Respectfully Submitted, Alyssa Sabetto, Senior Planner