

**Minutes Rochester Planning Commission
November 4, 2025
Rochester Town Office and via Microsoft Teams**

Present: Julie Martin, Mary Fratini, Greg White, Dan McKinley, Sandy Haas, Dave Curtis, Pat Harvey (zoning administrator), Christine Masaba-Meagher (remote)

Guests: Barb DeHart, Sean Collins, Carrie Collins, Deb Moore, Tara Murray, Don Murray, Lori Church (remote), Sharon Solomon (remote), Ben Falk (remote), Regina Cahill (remote)

Call to Order: Dan McKinley called the meeting to order at 6:30pm

Public Hearing re Barbara DeHart application for a Minor Subdivision of property at 146 Colonel DeHart Stand

Barb DeHart submitted an application for a minor subdivision of a 136-acre parcel into a new lot of 60 acres with a deeded ROW from Oak Lodge Road, and retaining 76 acres at 146 Colonel DeHart Stand.

Abutting landowners Sean and Carrie Collins objected to the proposed subdivision because they felt the proposed ROW would negatively impact their property, including but not limited to: access along their deeded ROW, disturbing an unmapped wetland, and affecting proper drainage of an existing pond.

After an extended discussion about the rules and requirements for ROWs, Mary Fratini moved that the board approve the minor division of property at 146 Colonel DeHart Stand into a new lot of 60 acres, to include a deeded ROW at least 30' wide for access to Oak Lodge Road over the existing shared ROW and continuing as shown on the survey map, and retaining 76 acres at 146 Colonel DeHart Stand. Julie Martin seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the application.

Administrative Officer Report: Building and Zoning Applications

Sandy Lincoln and Larry Plesent, 42 North Main Street – approved an outbuilding behind The Bookery.

Sean and Kelly Mitchell, 22 Ridge Road – approved an application for a new 3-bedroom house; the Mitchells have submitted a plan for the house and have a wastewater permit.

Jarod Mayer, 55 North Main Street – was asked to submit a building permit application for a new handicapped ramp in order to confirm the shape and distance from the property line; after submitting the design, Jaron confirmed that the ramp is temporary and so the permit fee was refunded.

Ted Chagnon, 17 Osprey Run – approved an application for an outbuilding.

Update on Great Hawk – The association has voted not to complete the second section of the septic system as laid out in their original design, which means that several currently vacant lots are now unbuildable. Owners of four of those lots are gifting them back to Great Hawk to be annexed onto the association's common land. Due to an historical agreement with Great Hawk that such common lands are not taxed, these lots would then be removed from the grand list. The board demonstrated concern about setting the precedent for lots to be unilaterally removed from the grand list and asked Pat Harvey

to try and locate the original agreement between the town and Great Hawk to confirm whether it contained any provisions for or limitations on expanding the size of the common land that is exempt from taxes.

Update on grant application – The town submitted an application for the Better Connections Grant last Friday that required a resolution from both the Selectboard and the Planning Commission. The town asked for funding for four different projects:

- extending/improving a bike path on Brook Street out to the Kirkpatrick property to be more appropriate for adaptive access;
- a second phase of sidewalk improvement down Route 100 towards Kennedy Drive;
- improving the unofficial dog path down by the river, which currently crosses private land, including adding doggie bag stations to address issues with waste and cleanup; and
- studying the intersection of Bethel Mountain Road and Route 100 for ways to improve flow and safety.

Dan had already signed the application on behalf of the Planning Commission. Greg White moved to approve a resolution supporting the grant; Julie Martin seconded the motion; the board voted unanimously to approve it.

Continue discussion of Vertex application to Public Utility Commission for cell tower to be located at 1030 Route 100 South.

Julie Martin recused herself from the board and stepped away from the table.

Dan noted that there was not much to update about the proposed cell phone tower as Vertex still has not filed a formal petition. He added that the current advance notice application should expire on November 29, 2025 so if they do not file a formal petition before that date, the application would be closed and they would have to begin the process anew.

Continue review of Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) draft Regional Future Land Use map

Julie Martin rejoined the board at the table.

At the April meeting, TRORC presented a draft of their Regional Future Land Use Map for Rochester (attached below). These maps are the result of requirements within Act 181 that include, but are not limited to: setting targets for additional housing units; standardizing the categories on certain land use maps; and encouraging development that preserves the long-term viability of traditional settlement patterns of denser, walkable villages surround by agricultural and forest lands.

The new map categories were given to TRORC by the state. They distinguish first between village and rural designations, and then establish three kinds of rural zones – rural-gen, rural-forest/ag, and rural-conservation.

In identifying village areas, TRORC considered the constraints of flooding, steep slopes, and presence/absence/possible expansion of water and wastewater infrastructure. In distinguishing between the different types of rural categories, rural-gen describes areas outside of villages that are already

developed; rural-forest/ag describes areas outside of villages that may have some development, but are primarily working lands; and rural-conservation describes areas outside of villages with minimal or no development, which may already be conserved and/or represent significant areas for conservation (e.g. high priority forest blocks, wetlands, etc). According to TRORC, these maps are meant to guide development that triggers Act 250 and do not affect single-family homes or parcels.

One goal of these maps is to help locate 55% or more of the housing targets in village areas. The housing target for Rochester is an additional 50-70 units (not necessarily new construction) by 2030. The proposed maps would slightly expand the existing village area for Rochester and add a village area for Talcville along State Garage Road.

TRORC had asked the board to provide feedback on these draft maps by the end of this year. After reviewing the TRORC presentation and maps, the board agreed that their primary feedback was that the proposed village areas include large areas that are not buildable because they are in the floodplain and/or subject to fluvial erosion concerns. Dan will send that feedback to TRORC.

Approval of minutes – The minutes for the October meeting were approved as submitted.

Public Comment -- limited to 3 minutes each

Julie Martin recused herself from the board and stepped away from the table.

Lori Church objected to the October minutes because they did not list people who had attended remotely. Sandy Haas and Dan explained that the policy of the board was only to list people who had participated in a meeting. Lori reiterated her position that town's position was more important than expert reports because of the language in Section 248a describing "substantial deference" to town plans.

Ben Falk summarized concerns he had emailed to Dan since the October meeting about the slope of the area for the road on the possible cell phone tower and the stated height of trees at the summit. Dan said he believed the advance notice application had used the standard topographic layer to determine the slope, but that he would check on that and compare it with what is listed in the Vermont Natural resources Atlas.

Deb Moore said she was disappointed that the board said there was not much to update about the proposed cell phone tower. She said she thought the board should have discussed Ben's emails during this meeting. She said she also thought the board should have discussed concerns she and Alvina Risinger-Harvey had previously mentioned about possible fire hazards.

Tara Murray reiterated her request that the board hire someone to review the potential visibility of the proposed tower. The board declined to do so. Tara repeated Lori Church's position that town plans were more significant than expert reports.

Sharon Solomon asked that, if Vertex were to file a formal application, when would the Planning Commission meet again. Dan said that the board would call a special meeting under those circumstances. Sharon noted that she thought the risk of fire at the proposed cell phone tower site came from frequency of lightning strikes.

Regina Cahill said that she had looked on Google and found evidence that the risk of fire came from equipment at cell phone tower sites, rather than the power lines.

Don Murray said that there had been at least three meetings of the Planning Commission where people joining remotely could not participate during the public comment period. He asked the board to fix this.

Pat Harvey said she wanted to remind everyone that they could go to the ePUC site and read the advance notice comments the Planning Commission already submitted to the Public Utility Commission. She said these comments already charged the state of Vermont to hire experts to address these issues. She said she had reread the comments herself several times over the last few months. She suggested that people keep in mind that although the members of the Planning Commission might not have specific answers, the board had done their due diligence by asking the state for support from experts.

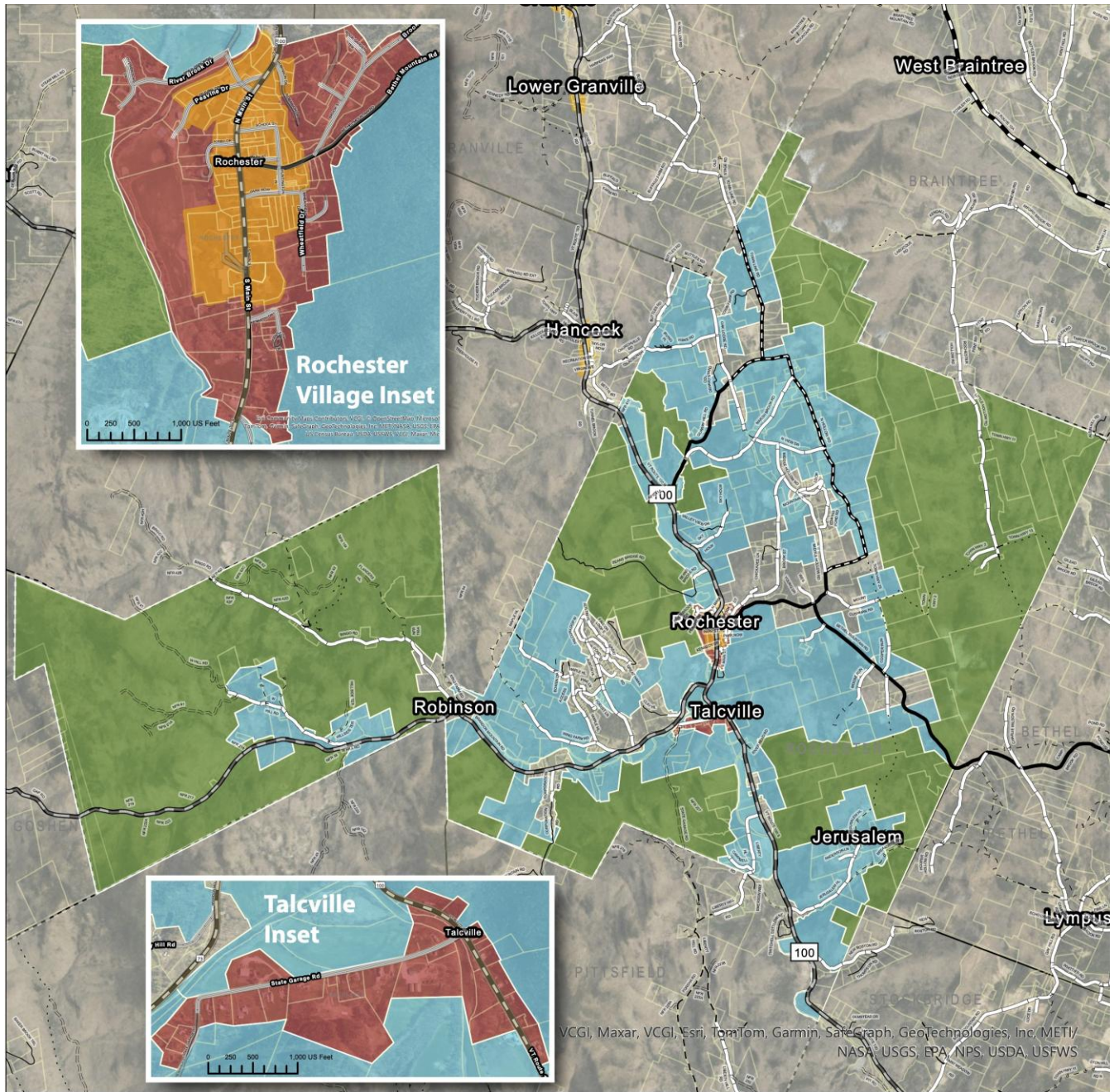
Other business

Dan said that Sarah Wright from TRORC has asked for a member of the Planning Commission to join a housing study in town. Dan noted that current members of the board were unable to commit to the additional time, but that he would go to the first meeting on November 13, 2025. Sandy said the board would look forward to reviewing the findings of the study.

Dan said that he and Mary will be attending a day-long retreat hosted by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns on short-term rentals.

Adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

Next meeting: December 2, 2025 at 6:30pm



Draft Rochester Regional Future Land Use Map - 04/01/2025 2025 Regional Plan Update