

1 **Town of Charlotte**
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**
3 **Meeting Conducted at Town Hall and via Teleconference**
4 **January 25, 2024**

5
6 ***DRAFT – subject to approval by the Planning Commission***
7

8 **Planning Commission:** Charlie Pughe (Chair), Matt Krasnow (Vice Chair), Robert Bloch, Gerald
9 Bouchard, Kyra Wegman, Carrie Spear. *Absent:* Linda Radimer.

10 **Staff:** Larry Lewack, Town Planner, Recording Secretary, Nicole Burnell.

11 **OTHERS:** Frank Tenney, Charles Russell, Emily Lewis, Darren Schibler, Kelly Devine, Sarah
12 Thompson, Ruth Uphold, Dave McNally, Maggie Citarella, Matt Citarella, Deirdre Holmes, Claudia
13 Mucklow, Peter Joslin, JD Herlihy, Brandon Tieso, Alexa Lewis, Juliann Phelps, Mike Yantachka,
14 David Adsit, Steve Dickens

15
16 ***Posted Agenda:***

17 7:00 PM Call to Order
18 7:02 PM Changes to Agenda (if any); Public Comment
19 7:05 PM Village Master Plan Project Overview & Listening Session (for invited members of
20 other Town of Charlotte Boards and Commissions)
21 8:05 PM Nonconforming Structures: redraft of LURs amends (continued)
22 8:30 PM Mark up draft LURs revisions to Sec. 3.1, Sec. 9.7 & definitions
23 8:45 PM Review & approve draft meeting minutes: June 29, Jan. 4 mtgs.
24 9:00 PM Adjourn

25
26 **Call to Order:** Charlie Pughe called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

27
28 **Changes to Agenda (if any):**

29 Larry Lewack had an announcement and a question. The announcement being that the
30 Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) would be offering a free training at the
31 Hinesburg Town offices on January 31st open to any Planning Commission, Development Review
32 Board, or Selectboard member. Larry questioned if the Planning Commission’s regularly
33 scheduled February 1st meeting would still be held, given the January 18th was rescheduled to the
34 25th. (Charlie later confirmed we should stick to the Feb. 1 meeting, as planned.)

35
36 **Public Comment:** None.

37
38 **Village Master Plan Project Overview & Listening Session (for invited members of other**
39 **Town of Charlotte Boards and Commissions):**

40 Darren Schibler, representing the CCRPC, opened the session with an overview of the
41 project. Darren stated that engagement with a broad range of stakeholders in town will establish a
42 shared vision for the future of both villages. Once the shared vision is determined, that will lead to
43 drafting bylaw changes to better align the Land Use Regulations to that vision. Non-regulatory
44 work (such as applying for funding for shared water and wastewater infrastructure) will be
45 pursued as well. Darren introduced Emily Lewis, project lead at Dubois & King, and members of
46 the project Steering Committee, including Robert Bloch, Maggie Citarella, and Deirdre Holmes.
47 Deirdre, representing the Energy Committee, clarified that the CCRPC is simultaneously assisting

48 the Energy Committee with a transportation project. Darren then opened the conversation by
49 asking participants to articulate their ideas on what a village is.

50 Mike Yantachka pointed to the speeding problem in both the east and west villages. Mike
51 suggested widening the roads, adding bike lanes and speed tables.

52 Carrie Spear suggested that former dairy farms be conserved & leased to younger farmers,
53 to help keep the land open and in agricultural use. Wants more housing to enable the aging
54 population to transition to smaller houses. Keep Route 7 uncommercialized. See Hinesburg Rd.,
55 which links the East and West villages, could serve as the 'axis' for future development of both
56 villages, which could be linked with a shuttle (as they develop with more services) to connect
57 residents who now rely upon cars to get between the two.

58 Dave Adsit advocated for appropriate development and defining the scope of increasing
59 density in the villages. Dave questioned if increasing planned density in the villages would truly
60 alleviate historic development pressure in the rural parts of town.

61 Deirdre suggested review of the map print shared in the meeting, which illustrates the
62 pattern of development in recent years. Larry noted the map reveals that 94% of new construction
63 in the past generation has been in the rural district, which directly contradicts the core value of
64 concentrating growth in the villages, as expressed in our town plan, and in our regional plan and
65 state statute. We now have 5-acre zoning in the village districts. That is antithetical to creating
66 more housing and commerce where we want them, within our villages. A key focus of this project
67 is to implement smart growth rules, to avoid rural sprawl. Peter Joslin asked if part of smart
68 growth is to discourage development in rural areas. Emily Lewis said that's outside the scope of
69 this project, but it's a good point to keep in mind.

70 Kyra Wegman said a public square is part of her concept of a village. Kyra suggested
71 additional commerce and connectivity in the villages to increase street life.

72 Steve Dickens presented his vision of a village includes concentrated housing and
73 commerce. He moved from Burlington to South Burlington, to Shelburne, to Charlotte for the open
74 space, which the town should continue to protect. Steve suggested promoting the transfer of
75 development rights (from rural to village districts) to promote smart growth. Matt Krasnow
76 responded that's already an option in Land Use Regulations (LURs); what's missing is a way to
77 'bank' transferred density until it can be used for projects proposed for the villages.

78 Matt Citarella noted that the Conservation Commission had proposed amendments to the
79 LURs that would further protect rural areas, and encouraged review of those changes.

80 Peter Joslin stated the map which illustrates development patterns is disturbing. He noted
81 the town offers few housing options other than for those who are wealthy. Young families and
82 working folk can't afford to live here. Village density rules we have now don't make sense. He
83 suggested we consider dividing the current rural district into multiple districts with varying
84 density—some with less than 5 acres per unit, some more dense, as Hinesburg has done.

85 JD Herlihy said that his family moved to the center of the West Village to be closer to its
86 services & ambience. His concept of a village includes commerce, activities, and community
87 gatherings. He's not sure the current 5 acre zoning is as restrictive as it sounds, given the
88 flexibility to build at a greater density for some projects, within our current LURs.

89 Kelly Devine presented her concept of a village, which starts with more people living in the
90 villages. Vibrant village centers start with more housing, then commerce follows. Kelly said that
91 change is inevitable, and needs to be planned for. Kelly suggested we bring people that are
92 involved in real estate development into the conversation, to understand their perspectives.

93 Brandon Tieso cautioned against compromise, even if for noble causes. No dramatic
94 changes. Develop in a way that preserves beauty.

95 Claudia Mucklow suggested that village development occur on the European model, 'from
96 the inside out.' This leaves countryside wide open for farming and open space. Claudia would like
97 to increase density in the villages and reduction of development in the rural areas.

98 Dave McNally stated preference for the town to preserve its rural character. He questioned
99 if growth is necessary at all. He questioned if this project is coming from a desire to increase
100 population or tax revenue. He discussed physical constraints, such as the west village lacks
101 adequate water supply. If bringing water in is necessary, what might be the unintended
102 consequences? He asked that Dubois & King prepare visual scenarios of how the villages could
103 develop. Emily Lewis responded that such illustrations will be part of the project.

104 Frank Tenney said he'd like to see controlled growth. Frank said that the perspectives of
105 those that live in the villages should be considered. Zoning changes to other districts should be
106 explored too, if we want to address rural growth pressures.

107 Juliann Phelps asked for the Recreation Commission to be included in the process. Juliann
108 suggested looking at previous work they did on the proposal to build a community recreational
109 center for Charlotte, which was voted down in its early stages.

110 Charles Russell agreed with Frank's point about investigating options beyond the villages.
111 Charles talked about his experience with trading developmental rights. Regarding the proposed
112 east to west expansion, consider wastewater placement and areas of high public value.

113 Alexa Lewis said that her concept of village includes services. Services create the desire to
114 live close to them. Alexa asked that parking and wetlands be considered.

115 Matt Citarella spoke to lighting. Growth will mean more lights; keep enforcing the 'dark sky'
116 standards in our LURs now. He wants us to keep demographic trends in mind as we rewrite rules
117 to guide development. For example, our population continues to trend older, as young people
118 must leave town to find housing that they can afford, resulting in an exodus of people/talent.

119 Frank recalled how a proposed gas station with small store at the corner of Ferry Rd. and
120 Route 7 was rejected. Now we have a small agricultural lot at the busiest intersection in town.
121 This is an example of blowback, even for projects that meet community needs. Frank suggested
122 useful growth such as a grocery store, or a bank with a drive thru. He wants to see limited
123 commercial development along the Route 7 corridor near the West Village.

124 Kyra said (in response to comments about a plan for building a state park n' ride lot in the
125 west village) that the issue is not parking, it's being able to walk safely between established uses.
126 We don't need more car-oriented services. Rather, we need to encourage parking in a central spot,
127 and make it possible for people to safely walk between them.

128 Dave Adsit advocated for the town's continued identity as an agricultural community.
129 Charlotte continues to have dairy farms, and produces hay that's sold widely around the region.
130 Emily responded that farmers called out the need for housing for their employees.

131 Dave McNally said that there are many unmet needs; one package may not solve all.

132 Deirdre said she would like the west village to have a public transit bus stop. GMT operates
133 a bus route connecting Middlebury and Burlington, but that bus no longer stops in Charlotte.

134 Matt Krasnow asked that the consultants research fully fledged transferrable development
135 rights. He also suggests we present a summary on what's changed in Charlotte over time, to
136 provide context for this project. We should consider funding landowners to conserve open land,
137 rather than just requiring that in exchange for permission to develop housing in the rural district.

138 Dave Adsit suggested a map displaying hydrologic and soil map overlay as it relates to
139 wastewater capacity. (*Ed. note:* this info is already available within the Charlotte Map Viewer.)

140 Matt Citarella asked if the town had looked into directly financing affordable housing.

141 Robert Bloch asked for perspective of the previous housing spikes in Charlotte, to better

142 understand what factors drive development in the rural district over time.

143 Mike Yantachka said that short-term rentals take housing off the market for those
144 interested in moving to Charlotte, and creates commercial activity in residential areas. He again
145 asked the Planning Commission to amend the LURs to regulate this trend.

146 Matt Citarella implored those in attendance to survey and otherwise involve residents that
147 do not typically participate in these discussions, as the project moves forward.

148 Gerald Bouchard spoke to transferrable development rights; in his experience, it has been
149 used very rarely (only 1-2 times in the past 13 years). Gerald pointed to the map that illustrates
150 development patterns, and noted that many of the minor subdivisions in recent years were to
151 create building lots for the adult children of property owners. JD agreed.

152 Darren listed next steps in the project. Larry said that posters about the project will be
153 displayed in 5 high-traffic locations around town, with surveys that can be completed on paper &
154 deposited into drop boxes at each location. An online version of the survey is also available.
155 Charlie clarified that this survey is not the same one being promoted now in the *Charlotte News*.

156
157 **Nonconforming Structures: redraft of LURs amends (*continued*):**

158 Agenda item tabled due to time constraints.

159
160 **Mark up draft LURs revisions to Sec. 3.1, Sec. 9.7 & definitions:**

161 Agenda item tabled due to time constraints.

162
163 **Review/approve draft PC meeting minutes: for June 29, January 4, mtgs.:**

164 **MOTION by Matt Krasnow, seconded by Carrie Spear, to approve the PC meeting**
165 **minutes for June 29, 2023, as amended. VOTE: 4 ayes, motion carried.** Kyra Wegman and
166 Gerald Bouchard abstained.

167 **MOTION by Robert Bloch, seconded by Gerald Bouchard, to approve the PC meeting**
168 **minutes for January 4, 2024, as amended. VOTE: 4 ayes, motion carried.** Kyra Wegman and
169 Carrie Spear abstained.

170
171 **Adjournment:**

172 **MOTION by Robert Bloch; seconded by Kyra Wegman, to adjourn the meeting. VOTE:**
173 **6 ayes, motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

174
175 *Minutes respectfully submitted:*

176 Nicole Burnell, Recording Secretary, with edits by Larry Lewack, Town Planner.