

Municipal Plan Approval Checklist

Town: Cabot Date: 8/2012

Reviewer: Jackie Cassino

Staff / Committee Present: Jackie Cassino (staff); Tim Carver; George Malek; Bill Arrand; Bob Wernecke;

Town representatives: Gary Gulka (Planning Commission)

Background: The following is a review of the Cabot Plan under the provisions and standards of Chapter 117, Section 4350, wherein it is stated “a regional planning commission shall review and approve plans of its member municipalities, when approval is requested and warranted.” Conditions warranting approval include findings that the plan:

- Contains each of the **eleven** elements listed in section 4382 of Chapter 117;
- Is consistent with the **thirteen** goals established in Section 4302 of Chapter 117. (“Substantial progress toward attainment” of these goals is the standard by which consistency is evaluated); and
- Is **compatible** with the Regional Plan and the approved plans of other municipalities in the Region.

General Comments/Notes: The previous Cabot Town Plan was adopted in 2003 and approved by CVRPC September, 2003. This plan expired in 2008. The 2012 update provides Cabot the opportunity to expand upon many goals, policies and implementation strategies established in the 2003 plan, as well as provide status updates on planning goals/policies/strategies. The 2012 Plan is substantially different document from its predecessor, both in form and content. Guided by an extensive public participation process, major themes emerged, including: managing resources in a sustainable manner; preserving and encouraging appropriate growth in the Village Center; and continuing to enhance and promote a strong sense of community. In particular, the Plan provides clear and measureable goals and implementation strategies relevant to each of the required elements. Each objective or implementation strategy contains a list of responsible parties as well as future measures of progress. This well-developed implementation strategy will support the plan as an active and living document. Overall, this plan will serve as a basis for future regulatory updates and area plans.

Staff Conclusion(s):

The Cabot Plan has met all the statutory mandates of Chapter 117 required for “approval” of the document by CVRPC. The Plan is also in conformance with the 2008 Regional Plan. The 2012 Plan represents a major rewrite of the previous Plan and exceeds it in length, content and ambition. The Plan provides a wealth of current data and a clearly articulated outline for future growth and development, detailing specific expectations for specific zones. Staff recommends its approval by the Review Committee and the full Regional Commission.

On 9/6/2012 the Town Plan Review Committee unanimously voted to recommend approval to the full Regional Commission.

Summary of MUNICIPAL PLAN REQUIREMENTS (under 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, Subchapter 5)

A Required Plan Elements/Maps [§4382(a)] Each of the elements are required in some form for all municipal plans:	Score		Pages	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Statement of municipal policies, objectives, programs to guide growth and development	TEXT	MAP		“Goals and Implementation Strategies” addressing the all of the required element are found at the end of each Element - each including a table indentifying the responsible party(s) and appropriate timeline for objective implementation.
2. Land use plan (and map) showing proposed land use areas/districts		Y	51-67	The Plan contains a detailed description of land use areas and current zoning districts. Map 1 identifies current land use cover, Map 5 identifies current zoning and Map 6 identifies potential future zoning. The Plan text accurately addresses current and future land uses for the identified geographical areas within the community. The Plan narrative also identifies the need for zoning regulation revisions as based on an in-depth public participation process, as well as current plans and related planning projects.
3. Transportation plan (and map) showing needed/proposed improvements		Y	88-98	The Plan narrative includes a detailed analysis of the current transportation system. The transportation map (Map 3) combines transportation, utilities, facilities, and housing-which provides an appropriate visual comparing all 4 interconnected elements. Even though Cabot is not currently served by public transit, the Plan narrative does discuss the importance of supporting future connections to established routes, as well as supporting other multi-modal transportation options as appropriate (i.e. the Village Center). Future updates could discuss the role of Complete Streets legislation, educational opportunities, a direct and explicit link between resource management and environmental impacts (i.e. energy use), the maintenance of Class IV roads for recreational access, identification of the closest air and rail transportation opportunities, and a more in-depth analysis of travel patterns.
4. Utilities, facilities, services plan (and map) showing present/proposed facilities, including water, sewer, solid waste, libraries, medical facilities, storm water drainage		Y	98-120	Map 3 identifies transportation, utilities, facilities, and housing. The Plan narrative discusses the existing conditions for the following services and infrastructure: municipal buildings/property/government; public services (emergency services, public water supply, solid waste, sewage, electric, communications, law enforcement); and organizations; educational facilities; recreational opportunities; health and human services; child care; and civic and cultural activities. The Plan narrative and Goals/Policies effectively identify the current capacity of infrastructure (water supply, wastewater). Future updates would benefit from a more thorough discussion in the narrative (this is identified as a goal/strategy) of the potential future needs based on projected demand-specifically examining the expansion of such services as linked with guiding development.

5. Educational facilities plan (and map) ; often included with the utilities/facilities element		Y	104	Map 3 identifies educational facilities. Educational facilities are thoroughly addressed in the Utilities/facilities section.
6. Statement of municipal policies on preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources			20--30	Within the Natural Resources element, both the Plan narrative and the Goals/Implementation Strategies identify the conservation and stewardship of significant natural communities and features through various means such as: updating of community mapping; develop appropriate regulatory mechanisms such as a natural resource overlay district; and encouraging public and private landowner education.
7. Energy element , including analysis of resources, needs, scarcities, costs, problems, and opportunities for conservation			68-80	The Energy section narrative identifies: existing conditions (state, county, and local levels); local providers; and planning considerations for sustainability (buildings/structures; transportation and settlement patterns; incentive programs; smart meters).
8. Housing element , including program for addressing affordable housing needs			41-51	The Plan narrative addresses current and projected housing and population trends - including a separate section focused on housing demand and affordability. Future updates would benefit from a discussion of creative affordable housing options such as accessory apartments, smaller square footage options, and proximity of affordable housing and proximity to goods as services.
9. Implementation program for the plan's objectives			-	Implementation strategies including key implementers and future measures of progress are identified at the end of each element.
10. Statement of how plan relates to development trends/plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region			8	The Plan identifies specific areas of past collaborative efforts as well as potential future collaborative efforts. Plan updates would benefit from more specific details being given as to how the Plan is compatible with the identified neighboring Town Plans.
11. Economic development element that describes present economic conditions and the location, type, and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, projects and programs necessary to foster economic growth. (effective date of July 1, 2012)			80-87	The Plan includes an Economic Development element which directly links economic health at the local level to various factors such as: infrastructure conditions and improvements; investments in public and recreational spaces; and the maintenance of the Town's unique and scenic character. This section identifies current economic conditions; recent growth trends; programs and resources to promote economic growth; appropriate planning considerations; and goals/implementation strategies.

B. Inventories, Studies, Analyses [§4302 (d), 4382(c)]. Include as appropriate to survey existing conditions and probable future trends	Score	Pages	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Population characteristics and distribution, including income and employment		5-7; 41-51	The Plan effectively addresses population characteristics and future projections as well as the 2009 median household and family income. More specific information on employment characteristics can be found in the Economic Development and the Community Snapshot sections. Future plan updates would benefit from an analysis of employment opportunities in the surrounding areas.
2. Existing & projected housing needs by type, amount, loc.		41-51	The Plan utilizes the CVRPC Regional Housing Distribution when analyzing the projected demand and supply of housing. The Plan also identifies specific locations that are optimal for increased residential development.
3. Existing and estimated patterns of growth in various land use classifications, and in relation to facilities & services		51-63	Future land use patterns and projected growth are identified for each land classification.
C. Consistency with Broad State Goals [§4302] Plans must show consideration/evidence of a continuing planning process that includes:	Score	Pages	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Coordinated, comprehensive planning process		1-3	This is addressed to an extent throughout the Plan narrative-specifically identifying the previous Buildout Analysis as well as the need for zoning regulation revisions that will be based on the updated Town Plan (Land Use section p. 62).
2. Citizen participation at all levels of the planning process		1-3	Citizen participation is highlighted throughout the plan narrative - particularly in the Community Facilities, Utilities, and Services section - which identifies the coordination among special interest and volunteer groups that took place during the revision of the Town Plan.
3. Consideration of use of resources, consequences of growth to region and state		10-28	Although not clearly identified in the Plan, this concept is addressed through various sections, such as: natural resources; transportation; energy; and land use.
4. Working creatively with other municipalities to develop, implement plans;		8-10	This is not specifically addressed in the Plan
D. Consistency with Specific State Goals [§4302] Plans must make substantial progress towards attainment of the following goals: (*or explain why goal is not applicable):	Score	Pages	Comments, notes, suggestions

<p>1. Plan development to maintain historic settlement pattern of compact villages surrounded by open countryside, including:</p>		<p>The plan proposes a newly designated Village Center District that promotes compact village settlement and proposes to permit smaller lot sizes and additional lot coverage, while retaining setbacks necessary to maintain the traditional patterns of development. This district will serve as the preferred location for the majority of future housing growth.</p> <p>In accordance with the preservation of rural landscape, the proposed subdivision regulations preserve open space through PRDs as permitted in all four zoning districts, which would allow for the clustering of housing units. Overall, the proposed higher densities (medium density residential districts) are adjacent to the Village District, which is off of major state and Town roads.</p> <p>The Town could consider identifying and protecting working lands and other valued natural resources (other than flood and water bodies) through the addition of overlay conservation districts as opposed to the sole Rural District.</p>
<p>(i) Encouraging intensive residential development primarily in areas related to community centers and discouraging strip development along highways</p>		<p>The Plan identifies the need to develop additional opportunities that would promote multi-modal transportation options, through the support of current public transit options, potentially connecting with existing routes, and developing bike/ped resources in the village core. The Town is currently undergoing a study examining bike/ped resources and opportunities in the area.</p>
<p>(ii) Encouraging economic growth in growth centers and / or village and urban centers</p>		<p>The Plan proposes a village overlay district that will serve to support working lands as well as promoting economic growth and diversity within the Village core and those already developed areas. The Town also intends to seek village designation status.</p> <p>Future plan updates would benefit from a more specific examination of what types of businesses the Town would like to encourage in the Village core as well as outlying areas (i.e. home-based businesses, value-added agricultural businesses, etc.). Plan updates would also benefit from narrative identifying the importance of location municipal and public buildings within the Village core.</p>
<p>(iii) Reinforcing the character and planned growth patterns of public investments, including infrastructure</p>		<p>The Plan is currently limited to municipal water/wastewater capacity discussion and the need to develop a capital improvement plan/budget. Plan updates would benefit from an examination of the link between public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, as planned to reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area. This could be accomplished through a separate implementation chapter that serves to summarize and prioritize public investments, discusses financing options, and identifies responsible parties.</p>

Consistency with Specific State Goals (continued from previous page)	Score	Pages	Comments, notes, suggestions
2. Provide a strong and diverse economy		80-88	<p>The Plan does include an economic development element. Overall, this section identifies the need for further analysis through an economic development plan that would strengthen the village Center District as an economic hub while improving parking, pedestrian access and village attractiveness. The Plan narrative specifically discusses the current economic conditions (characteristics of the larger-scale employers as well as home based businesses as well as the current state of agricultural production, which is backed up by a rich data set from a recent survey. The Plan does not discuss whether the Town is a job importing or exporting town, the current average annual income, poverty levels, unemployment levels or educational levels of the workforce.</p> <p>The plan discusses encouraging economic development within the Village area to preserve natural resources and cut down on transportation time. Also the connection to decrease transit time and the lowering of emissions could be made as well to reinforce the connections between transportation, energy use and the environment. Promoting growth within the village will also aid to preserve the rural resources within the town.</p> <p>Future updates could possibly provide linkages to other goals – land use (concentrate economic development within the Village District), transportation (less commuting or improved public transportation to outside Towns). Consider adding more specificity for types of businesses to attract (any niche markets?, more green businesses?).</p>
3. Broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities		104-107	<p>The Plan narrative encourages collaboration between the Cabot School and the Town to enhance the school as a community resource and enhance educational enrichment programs for all community members. In addition to the Town educational resources, the Plan narrative also discusses coordination with Vocational School in Barre as well as the adjacent towns of Marshfield and Plainfield.</p> <p>The Plan narrative addresses adult educational opportunities and encourages civic engagement for Cabot students.</p>
4. Provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems		88-98	<p>The Plan includes numerous transportation goals and strategies such as exploring public transportation opportunities, improving bike/ped routes in and around the village center, improving parking, and improving traffic safety in</p>

			<p>the village. The relocation and reconstruction of the town garage as well as a capital improvement plan for transportation equipment and infrastructure will support this goal.</p> <p>Future updates could discuss the role of Complete Streets legislation, Safe Routes to School and other educational opportunities, a direct and explicit link between resource management and environmental impacts (i.e. energy use), the maintenance of Class IV roads for recreational access, identification of the closest air and rail transportation opportunities, and a more in-depth analysis of travel patterns.</p>
5. Identify, protect and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including		10-41	The Natural Heritage Section identifies several goals and strategies including natural communities mapping, landowner education, and protection of significant natural communities through zoning tools. The Historic resources section recommends an updating of the historic resources inventory, educational efforts, and zoning tools to achieve this goal.
(i) Significant natural and fragile areas		22-24	The plan identifies significant natural and fragile areas as identified by the state along with both regulatory and non-regulatory methods for preservation. Plan updates would benefit from the inclusion of what makes these state designated areas “significant” as well as any areas deemed significant at the Town level.
(ii) Outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands		14-20	The plan identifies outstanding water resources and preservation techniques for such resources. Future plan updates would benefit from specific language that identifies the criteria for what makes a resource “outstanding” so that the maps and future regulations are legally defensible.
(iii) Significant scenic roads, waterways, and views		94	The plan does not identify scenic roads and views other than to mention that the state has a program for the designation of scenic roads. Plan updates would benefit from the addition.
(iv) Important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and arch. sensitive areas		31-40	The Plan narrative does provide a map and discussion of the 1979 state identified historic resources. The Plan also differentiates/identifies locally identified historically significant buildings and sites as identified by the Cabot Historical Society. The Plan does not include the criteria used for the locally identified significant historical buildings and sites. Future plan updates are encouraged to so for increased clarity and legal defensibility.
6. Maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources		13-27	The Plan contains implementation strategies such as an overlay district for the source protection areas of the town wells. Water quality enhancement goals and strategies include educational and regulatory tools to enhance stream bank and shoreline protection. The plan calls for regulatory and

			<p>educational tools to protect important wildlife habitat and significant natural communities. Prime agricultural soils are identified as an important resource to protect through land use regulation.</p> <p>More specifics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a current map of Natural Resources and the need for a more localized inventory (to supplement to state-based inventory) is identified in the Goals/Implementation Strategies. • The identification of current air quality conditions. future plan updates could make an additional link to the Transportation and Energy chapters regarding the improvement and maintenance. • The plan includes non-regulatory recommendations (educational and development incentives for PUDs) and regulatory incentives (update zoning with appropriate setbacks). • the plan discusses floodplain protection as the Town has adopted an updated NFIP based Flood Hazard Ordinance.
<p>7. Encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources</p>		<p>68-79</p>	<p>Goals and strategies are included in the Energy section that promote energy efficiency and development of renewable energy resources at appropriate sites.</p> <p>The Plan narrative identifies the connection among energy, transportation and land use (this concept is not only mentioned in the Narrative and Goals of the Energy section, but is also linked in the Land Use and Transportation Chapters).</p> <p>The pattern of land use proposed in the community appears to encourage the efficient use of energy through the proposed location of development in relation to community services and in terms of lot layout and design.</p> <p>Future plan updates would benefit from more specific language identifying where each type of renewable energy resource would be most conducive and areas that the Town would prefer not to see such development.</p>
<p>8. Maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, including identifying, providing, and protecting public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, where applicable</p>		<p>107</p>	<p>Recreational resources are reviewed in the Community Facilities, Utilities, and Services section. The plan identifies important recreational areas and calls for the continued development of recreational resources such as trails.</p>
<p>9. Encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries, including:</p>		<p>60-61; 64- 65;81- 84;</p>	<p>Working lands are addressed in the Natural Heritage section and various strategies are recommended to maintain the working landscape.</p> <p>Public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as</p>

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		87;	lakes and hiking trails, is discussed to an extent in both the Transportation and Community Facilities Chapters (i.e the maintenance of Class IV roads and their role in recreational access). Future updates would benefit from the identification of specific areas of significant recreational access importance that may be vulnerable to development or road upgrades.	<i>upgra</i>
(i) protection of long-term viability of agricultural and forest lands and maintenance of low overall density		60-65	Agriculture is addressed in the Economic Development Chapter, within the Zoning Standards (Low Density Residential and Agricultural District)section of the Land Use Chapter, within the Existing Conditions section of the Land Use Chapter (ag and forestry); in the Goals and Implementation Strategies section of the Land Use Chapter: "Goal V.3 Land is used and developed in a way that retains working farms and productive forest land as major land uses in the Town and protects natural, historic, and scenic resources." Future Plan updates would benefit from a separate section devoted to Working Lands in order to accurately characterize the current state of such lands and create a clear link to the established goals and strategies.	
(ii) encouraging the manufacture and marketing of value-added agricultural and forest products		81-87	The plan discusses the economic value of agriculture but not forestry. The plan identifies viable policies and recommendations on how to encourage the protection of working lands, including: a) establishing a lower max residential density and lower minimum house size in the Low Density Res/Ag District; b) Inventory and Map critical ag/open/forested lands to better serve the Town as base for the development review process; c) creation of an Ag Overlay District on location of VT prime ag soils with lower maximum density provisions and heightened review standards; f) education for landowners regarding conservation easements and coordinate with statewide farmland database.	
(iii) encouraging sound forest and agricultural practices		-	The plan does not discuss methods of agriculture/silviculture and their potential impact on the environment.	
(iv) planning public investment so as to minimize development pressure on agriculture and forest land		-	The plan does not address the need to direct public investments such as roads and sewer systems and other infrastructure away from agricultural and forest land.	
10. Provide for the wise and efficient use of natural resources, facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and proper restoration and preservation of aesthetic qualities		10-30	Existing natural resources are identified and discussed in the Natural Resources Section including strategies to ensure their efficient and safe utilization.	
11. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing, including:		41-50	The Housing and Population section examines housing demand and affordability with the goal of ensuring the availability of affordable housing options for all age groups.	
(i) Encouraging housing to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in the community,		41-50	The plan has a housing section that encourages low income housing and housing for the elderly.	

particularly for citizens of low and moderate income.			
(ii) Ensuring that new and rehabilitated housing is safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.		41-50	The plan examines the current types and costs of housing, housing density, and the proposed land use patterns or public investments in the plan support the resident's ability to have safe and affordable housing. The plan also encourages safe housing by ensuring the rental Housing Health Code is enforced.
(iii) Identifying sites for multi-family and manufactured housing in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.		41-50	Future plan updates would benefit from a direct discussion of the availability of health care and elderly services as well as the general proximity of housing for vulnerable populations.
(iv) Allowing accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences.		41-50	The Plan does not discuss accessory apartments.
12. Finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs, (eg fire, police, EMS, schools, water, sewage, & solid waste)		98-120	<p>The Plan includes a discussion of existing public facilities in the Community Facilities, Utilities, and Services element and discusses the need for a capital budget and plan especially for the municipal wastewater system. Additionally, the need for policies and procedures for allocation of reserve capacity in the wastewater system is identified.</p> <p>Within each subsection of the element, the Plan identifies the current state of service as well as whether or not they are meeting the community's needs. Specific areas in need include: installation of additional dry-hydrants; develop a capital improvements plan; move Town garage to an area that can accommodate greater space demands and enable co-location with other public services such as volunteer fire dept, ambulance, etc.; hire a town manager; update website; and establish a DRB.</p> <p>Future plan updates would benefit from a discussion identifying how growth may impact services and facilities as well as how the Town will control growth in a manner that allows them to phase upgrades in facilities and the expansion of services at a rate that is sustainable.</p>
13. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care		122	The Plan narrative addresses the availability of childcare as related to the needs of the community. The Plan includes a list of currently available facilities and discusses the role of neighboring towns in childcare. Future updates could more closely examine the supply versus demand by examining the number of children in childcare, the number of children under the age of 5 and 5-8 as identified by the Census, and determine if there is any unmet

			<p>demand.</p> <p>The Plan discusses how the town can make childcare more available from a regulatory perspective (i.e. ensuring current residential zoning does not hinder in-home facilities), but this issue could be further developed (non-regulatory methods) in future Plan updates.</p>
E. Compatibility with Municipal, Regional Plans [§4350] Plans must be:	Score	Pages	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Compatible with other regionally approved town plans		8-9	The Plan identifies specific areas of past collaborative efforts as well as potential future collaborative efforts. Plan updates would benefit from more specific details being given as the how the Plan is compatible with the identified neighboring Town Plans.
2. Compatible with the Regional Plan		8-9; 46-48	The Plan is compatible with the Regional Plan.

CVRPC Regional Housing Distribution Plan elements	Plan
<p>The Regional Housing Distribution Plan is intended to be used by municipalities when updating their land use plans and regulations; AND Town Plans adopted after January 1, 2009 are expected to incorporate this Housing Distribution Plan onto their town plan housing element.</p>	<p>The Plan does incorporate the Housing Distribution Plan, with data comparison through 2009.</p>
<p>Town Plans shall contain a detailed map or maps of the town showing the town's preferred locations for future housing units – consistent with current or proposed zoning – for 80% of the anticipated 10 to 15 year housing demand.</p>	<p>Map 3 (Appendix B) depicts the locations of existing housing units in Cabot as well as multiple scenarios modeling growth from the Build Out Analysis (Maps 7a-c in Appendix B). Map 4 (Appendix B) depicts the preferred location for 80% of the 10 year projected new housing growth in Cabot: 35% is projected to occur within the Medium Density and Undeveloped Village District; 65% of the projected growth is projected to occur within the Low Density and Residential Agricultural District. A proposed reduction in permitted residential density combined with a reduction in minimum lot size will enable better protection of resources in this district.</p>
<p>Town Plans shall also provide mapping updates that identify the locations and number of housing units created in the town since the previous town plan adoption.</p>	<p>Map 4 (Appendix B) depicts the preferred location for the projected housing growth.</p>
<p>Towns and cities are required to demonstrate the community's intent to meet the proposed housing unit numbers laid out in the Housing Distribution Plan or to describe in detail the obstacles that make attainment impossible. CVRPC will consider the planning effort to encourage housing development in relation to the Housing Distribution plan when approving a municipal plan.</p>	<p>See above comments.</p>
<p>CVRPC can and will work with municipalities to overcome any local barriers to housing production that prevent attainment of the housing unit numbers and suggest programs of local actions to address those barriers to housing. Towns unwilling to implement programs to address barriers to housing may have their plans denied Regional approval.</p>	<p>See above comments.</p>