

September 25, 2016

Planning Commission,  
Town of Charlotte, VT.

Re: Planning Commission Meeting 9/26/16: Revised Charlotte Town Plan

Dear Members,

At the outset, I appreciate and am grateful for the efforts by the Selectboard and Planning Committee in updating the Town Plan (TP).

Groundwater, as a natural resource in Charlotte, is identified in the revised TP much as it has been in earlier Town Plans. However, groundwater supply does not rise to the same importance in the revised TP as it should. For example, (i) groundwater quality is brought front and center under “Key Planning Considerations” (page 1.9), and, (ii) promotion of surface water and river corridors is brought front and center under “Natural Resource Policies” (page 1.9-1.10). Why isn’t ground water supply rising to the same key considerations and policies as water quality and surface waters?

Groundwater is a critical natural resource that is at least as important as water quality, habitat, and invasive species. Without adequate groundwater, groundwater quality is a moot point. Without adequate groundwater, preservation of wildlife, wetlands, forests, natural communities and life in Charlotte as we know it today, will simply not be possible. In view of climate change, appropriately identified under the TP Key Planning Strategies, the objective of preserving adequate groundwater supply should be front and center in the revised Town Plan. Groundwater preservation should be added to the objectives under (i), (ii) above.

Issues relating to groundwater supply in Charlotte’s West Village have been raised for as long as I can remember (60+ years) even before poor lowland groundwater resources and poor lowland groundwater recharge, which include all of the West Village, were confirmed by a state hydrogeological survey of the town of Charlotte in 2010. The 2002 Town Plan laid the groundwork for groundwater studies in the West Village. Concerns about groundwater *quantity* in the West Village was unequivocally expressed in the 2013 re-adopted 2008 TP. (CTP; 2.1.1.2 and 2.1.4.2). To wit, Charlotte’s 2008/2013 TP stated that groundwater supplies are limited in some areas, “*such as portions of West Charlotte Village*”. (CTP; page 53). Actions that might be advanced for addressing the concerns of limited groundwater supply in the West Village are not specifically addressed in the revised TP. They should be.

The 2010 hydrogeological study advanced our understanding of West Village groundwater supply issues. Recently, these same groundwater issues were raised again by the residents of the West Village last fall and winter with the Planning Committee and the Selectboard. Yet, the revised TP makes no specific recommendations on how groundwater supply issues might be addressed.

As a starting point, under Ch. 1.9 “Economic Development Strategies”, why not recommend the establishment of a Charlotte Water Supply Commission alongside the proposed Wastewater Advisory Committee? I can see no downside. A Water Supply Commission could, for example, evaluate the appropriateness of a water supply district in the West Village, explore sources of

water, review the pros and cons of a private or public water supply, and, coordinate plans with the Wastewater Committee. It's hard for me to imagine how a Charlotte Waste Water Advisory Committee could meaningfully and responsibly move forward without coordinating with a West Village water supply plan developed by a parallel West Village water supply committee.

Today, Charlotte residents cannot look to the current town or state regulations to ensure that adequacy of their current groundwater source won't be compromised by the inevitable new wells that will be required with development or with simply increased density by adaptive reuse of existing buildings in the West Village. The smaller the developable Village lot and the greater the need for more septic capacity for the reuse of existing buildings, the greater the likelihood that septic shields in one lot will extend onto and overshadow *potential* well sites in a neighboring lot (which is allowed in Vermont) rendering that portion of the neighbor's lot, or potentially no portion of the neighbor's lot (e.g., a very small half acre lot), suitable for a well to provide the neighbor with adequate water for their needs. Legal action in this regard can be anticipated.

Nor are rural areas immune to these groundwater supply issues. A neighbor whose current well adequacy is adversely impacted by a new well has no recourse other than to take legal action after the offending new well is operational. These are issues that have arisen in other Vermont towns and could be mitigated by advance planning in Charlotte. Regulation of groundwater source, withdrawal rate, replenishment and impact on neighboring existing groundwater supplies in the West Village, and by extension to the East Village and rural areas of Charlotte, should be under consideration now before the next decade and more extreme climate change is upon us. To not investigate these issues would be foolhardy and place the future of Charlotte in jeopardy.

A *plan* in the proposed Town *Plan* for addressing the preservation and the adequacy of groundwater in Charlotte should first start with stating that a plan is needed followed by proposing a community dialogue either by sanctioning a group consisting of interested community member volunteers to study Charlotte's groundwater issues and make recommendations, or by some other means available to the Selectboard and Planning Commission.

To do nothing more in this decade, a decade and a half after groundwater issues were raised merely as a concern in the 2002 Town Plan, is simply untenable. Let's stop kicking the can down the road. Let's get it into the 2016/2017 Town Plan.

Sincerely,



Ronda P. Moore  
2922 Greenbush Road

cc. Charlotte Selectboard  
Luke Adler  
Mark and Laurie Moser  
King Milne  
Alaina Murphy  
Happy Patrick  
Jason Stockwell