

Jamaica Planning Commission (JPC) – Meeting Minutes

Organizational Meeting and Regular Meeting

Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Location: Jamaica Town Offices, 28 Town Office Road

Attendance

JPC Members Present: Bryan Zeiroff, Patrick McQuillan, Siobhan McDermott, John Vanhousen

Public Present: Jason Kass, Karen Ameden

Organizational Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM.

1. Election of JPC Chairperson for the March 2026 to March 2027 term.
Siobhan nominated Bryan; Patrick seconded. The nomination was approved unanimously. This marks Bryan's seventh year as Chairperson.
2. Election of JPC Secretary for the March 2026 to March 2027 term.
Bryan nominated John; Patrick seconded. The nomination was approved unanimously.
3. Adjourn. Motion was made by Bryan and seconded by Siobhan, with all members in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:08 PM.

Regular Meeting

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:09 PM.

1. Call for Additions to Agenda
Bryan added a discussion of Act 181.
2. Approval of Draft Minutes
Bryan moved to approve the draft minutes for the January 19, 2026 JPC Regular Meeting; John seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
3. Long Range Planning

Siobhan requested Jason Kass attend this meeting to discuss the school planning commission. The commission is considering various aspects of utilizing the school building to benefit the community and exploring sustainable business models. The school information meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 31st. Tom volunteered to be the moderator for the meeting, pending confirmation next week.

These discussions highlighted the need for a town implementation plan, including strategies for building community and supporting businesses. The proposal is to develop a "Jamaica 2035" or similar initiative and collaborate with other organizations to secure grants and funding. The commission needs to establish priorities and create a guiding structure.

Jessica Pollack was quoted as indicating that long-term planning falls under the JPC's responsibilities, not the select board.

Karen Ameden said that in 1994, the JPC had an economic development committee. John asked about aligning with SVEds, noting that alignment could increase chances for funding. Although relationship-building has been discussed, no efforts have been made yet. Emma Spett provided a funding options sheet (appendix a).

Jason suggested the plan could be financed and that its development could proceed alongside the school project.

Bryan asked about the distinction between the town plan and a master plan. Siobhan clarified that the town plan is aspirational, while the long range plan is an actionable sequence with milestones. A professional facilitator is needed for this process.

Bryan noted the recent completion of the Town Plan, which took six months and required outside assistance. SVEDs may be a good partner. The commission will research suitable facilitators. Siobhan agreed to support the organization of volunteers and efforts to secure funding but input from the JPC will be needed along the way.

Siobhan moved for the JPC to shepherd the long range plan project; Bryan seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Jason questioned how the plan would relate to the town plan. The relationship is uncertain, as much of the town plan is aspirational.

Emma Spett sent an email with funding information.

4. Status of Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

John is working on the plan. The BRIC grant, regulated to be released Friday, is pending. FEMA is currently unresponsive. The plan is necessary for reimbursement at higher rates, but the commission is in a gray area without funding, creating a Catch 22 situation.

5. Funding Opportunities

The wastewater study for the village received a loan with 0% interest if construction proceeds. Chrissy Haskins aims to secure funding before additional steps. Opportunities are emerging for shovel-ready projects. The plan is to finalize design funding, seek additional resources, and prepare for a construction grant with a five-year loan repayment delay.

The school property is being considered as a possible site for the wastewater project; soil testing funds are available.

Siobhan has identified funding sources for the master plan.

6. Sign Ordinance Update

The town had a sign ordinance from the 1950s, which may be outdated. The ordinance was rewritten in 2018 and edited during a meeting, but it is unclear if the current copy reflects these edits. The ordinance could be legally challenged. The commission needs to update, adopt the 2018 ordinance, and vote to remove the previous two ordinances.

Tom Tolbert has rewritten the ordinance and will provide to Bryan.

7. Act 181 Discussion

Chrissy Haskins called Bryan to discuss Act 181 earlier in the day, noting the lack of notifications makes it difficult to stay informed. The act introduces classifications and tiers for land protection, with less regulation in municipal areas and stricter protections in zones like West Jamaica Road and Pikes Falls. The focus shifted from project size to area-based considerations, aiming to drive smart development and support affordable housing. Chris Campany of Windham Region Commission indicated homeowners are exempt, but the act lacks explicit language. Bryan commented on the state's high property and sales taxes, questioning the need for additional mechanisms.

BDCC provided a presentation attended by Karen and Siobhan about urban housing.

8. Other Business

No additional business was discussed.

9. Public Concerns

Karen inquired about the state's plan, proposed 2–4 years ago, to add 40,000 houses in Vermont and 126 in Jamaica. The commission had no updates on this issue.

10. Adjournment

Bryan made a motion to adjourn; John seconded. All members were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:26 PM.

Appendix A – Funding Sources

Master Planning information

From Emma Spett
3/16/26

I'm excited about the prospect of exploring possibilities for the Jamaica Village School building. There are a variety of funding opportunities and approaches that might be worth us exploring. Here are a few:

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board sponsors a program called the Rural Economic Development Initiative, which hires consultants on behalf of small VT towns (5,000 people or less) to support planning, grant writing, etc.

More info here: https://vhcb.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/VHCB_Rural-Economic-Development-Initiative-REDI_Overview_PDF_2022.pdf

Community supported enterprises are similar to the CSA model, where community members provide financial support for business endeavors. The Preservation Trust of Vermont is supporting a few, mostly general stores, around VT but I think the more diversified programming proposed for the school would be of interest to them. They're also building out a toolkit for CSEs that we should look into.

More info: <https://ptvermont.org/our-work/cse/>

Finally, we discussed the need for community visioning meetings to align the vision of the school with the needs of the community. There are a few resources to support this work. While generally the [VT Council on Rural Development](#) does this through their community visits, we can explore other options. Marguerite Dibble of [Game Theory](#) is a local entrepreneur developing a framework for community visioning. I believe we could secure funding from the Vermont Community [Foundation](#) to support that work.

There are many other exciting opportunities, we just need to be primed to take advantage of them! Hopefully the above ideas are compelling.

Thanks,
Emma