

Shrewsbury Planning Commission  
**MINUTES**  
July 8, 2025  
7:00 – 8:30 p.m.  
Shrewsbury Town Office  
9823 Cold River Rd., Shrewsbury VT

Shrewsbury Planning Commission

7:00 to 7:15 p.m.            Open to public input

Following public input:

1. Call to order  
Meeting called to order at 7:00  
Attendees: Laura Black, Conner Self, and Melissa Reichert. Julianne Sharrow, Chad Sharrow, Aaron Korzun, Pam Darrow; and Tim Stout and Cynthia Thorton, remotely
2. Approval of agenda, review and/or revision  
Agenda approved as presented.
3. 7:10 pm – Agriculture, Meadowlands, Pollinators Focus Group
  - Current state – Describe the current condition You can include relevant history, such as how the town reached this condition.
    - Are there identifiable vulnerabilities?
  - Identify any changes that have occurred in the past eight years, since 2018/19.
  - Explain why this subject is significant or important to the town.
  - Discuss what aspects of this subject might be important in the coming years, both in the near and distant future.

The reason the land is open is because it is a business – raising beef cows, otherwise it would not be open. Haying does not make money. Beef prices have gone up and now may be able to make money. The way to keep land open is to have it productive or have wealthy people who pay to keep it open. The invasives are taking over since the fields are not being fertilized. Reed Canary Grass is an invasive in pastures and hay fields; cattle don't eat it; it grows especially in wet areas. Some of the lands that are open really should not be open because they are wet and not productive. NCRS is a resource to identify wet lands and what the soils/lands are actually viable for. Only a small amount of the meadowlands are mapped as prime/state agricultural soil. And the mapping was inaccurate. So one really does not know if it is prime/state agricultural soils unless it is tested. The maps are what we have to use for planning.

Forest Parks and Recreation wants open land maintained in the area of Coolidge State Forest to add diversity. Open lands provide habitat for birds and wildlife. Late mowing can protect ground bird habitat. Tourists also like them because they provide scenic diversity and views.

Meadowlands - should the Town Plan and Zoning target prime Ag soils; response - it should be both, but should be more than 2 acres.

Where does the hay harvested in Shrewsbury go. It goes for beef cows in the area. The hay is Shrewsbury is not high enough quality for horses. Area residents get their horse hay from people who live in more productive haying areas.

If you are in agriculture, making money is paying your bills. Someone has to work off site to get health insurance. In vegetable farming, starting out is very difficult (financially); small, intensified and diversified vegetable farms seem to be most successful.

What are the viable uses of open lands. Solar farms are being put in open lands. But the solar can be an eyesore. The fences around the installations prevent wildlife from moving – although the fences are supposed to wildlife permeable – is this true? Cutting down a forest for solar is even worse than using open land. Housing is another use for open lands. We already have Open Space development allowed in our zoning. Cluster housing also allows for habitat connectivity. The septic systems that are being developed may allow more compact housing developments. The Act 250 changes call for having housing closer to downtown. Ten acres for housing seems to be a bit elitest and consumes land. Traffic has to be considered in any housing development.

Ultimately Irene took the last dairy farm in Shrewsbury out of dairy business because they could not get their corn from the farmer that they used to buy corn from since the fields were flooded. The value of milk is not what it should be. The flooding and droughts from climate change are an issue.

There are heavy infestations of poison parsnip in fields and it ruins a field. The invasives are a big vulnerability for the open lands. The lands have to be continually mowed to remove the invasives. Autumn Olive which is an invasive, as well as native trees such as beech, poplar and basswood will quickly take over pastures that are not mowed or grazed. Pasturing cows on the land and mowing it as well is good for the lands. Cows add nutrients and aerate the soil. Rosa flora invasive may thrive more in soils with higher PH? (is this true?) Deer browse of oak may be also due to there being little else to eat as invasives choke out the growth of other deer browse.

The biggest risk is climate change, it is going to make maintenance of fields and roads much harder. There is high cost to adapt to climate change such as installing bridges, large culverts.

4. Rounds and mail (SPC members' updates and review PC mail received)

We received The Notice of Premise and Public Hearing for Discontinuance of the ROW For Town Highway #47. Rutland Regional Planning Commission land use map is almost done.

5. Acceptance of meeting minutes of June 24, 2025

Meeting minutes accepted as written.

6. Other urgent business before summer break  
As noted in the last meeting minutes. Laura will make a copy of the draft Rutland Regional Plan.
7. To do list review – same list as before
  - Scenic Resources - Melissa
  - Town Plan Maps discussion – see 11/12/24 minutes
  - Meadowlands review - proceed per 10/08/24 notes

Next meeting September 9, 2025

8. Adjourn

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Planning Commission, Chair

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Date