

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION
Thursday December 10, 2020, 6:30pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86340389705>

Meeting ID: 863 4038 9705

Members Present: Melissa Horwitz (C), Brian Loeb, Jaci Allen, Jeff Goodrich, Jeff Lubell, Leah Romano, Ernie Ciccotelli
Public Present: Roger Arnold, Claudette Brochu
Staff: Rod Francis, Herb Durfee

Meeting Opened: 6:32pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Allen moved and Loeb seconded a motion to approve the Agenda. Motion carried 5 – 1.

2. Meeting Objectives:

- Define next steps on updating the 2005 wastewater study and provide feedback to Selectboard.
- Update from the Affordable Housing Committee on Prudential Committee land recommendations and plan to develop educational materials that address frequently asked questions about affordable housing in Norwich.
- Discuss process and policies for the Planning Commission

3. Public Comment:

Claudette Brochu provided comments as Selectboard Chair that she objected to the conduct of commissioner Goodrich in planning commission meetings. She asked Goodrich to consider stepping aside.

Roger Arnold joined Claudette Brochu in her observations in regard to Goodrich's behavior.

Jeff Goodrich objected to their characterization of his behavior.

4. Review and approve Minutes November 12, 2020:

Allen moved and Loeb seconded a motion to approve the minutes of November 12, 2020 as amended (see items seven and twelve). Motion carried 5–1.

5. Announcements, Reports, Updates & Correspondence:

- Correspondence: none
- Updates: Francis informed the meeting:
 - i. Norwich has been awarded the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) for the Subdivision Density Factor Study
 - ii. The Planning Commission meetings have been uploaded to the Town of Norwich YouTube website
 - iii. The Town received its Village Center Designation (VCD)

Loeb informed the meeting:

Rebecca Holcombe will chair the new Town of Norwich Childcare Committee which has met to refine task descriptions, reviewing the childcare section in the 2020 town plan, and the material from the Planning Commission Childcare Forum held as part of the town plan process.

Allen expressed her thanks to Loeb and Lubell for the Affordable Housing Op-Ed piece published in the *Valley News*

6. Define next steps on updating the 2005 wastewater study and provide feedback to Selectboard:

Allen introduced the item by reminding the meeting that Marion Cross School (MCS) is seeking solutions to their failed wastewater system. She asked if there was something the commission could be doing including exploring the broader issues around wastewater provision in the village area.

Goodrich informed the meeting again that he is representing MCS and may have a conflict of interest, but that he was able to discuss the broader questions with regard to options the Town has, the village wastewater situation, and how and in what ways they relate the issues at MCS.

Lubell spoke about the need of encouraging the Selectboard to talk with the MCS School Board, and that there was possibly an historic opportunity to resolve the wastewater issue at MCS and support a solution that works for the village area.

Francis informed the meeting that the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) operates a revolving loan fund that will pay for a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) if the community opts to proceed with a publicly funded project. Where the community undertakes the PER but does not pursue a publicly funded project the cost of the study must be refunded to DEC. The recent re-admission of Norwich into the Village Center Designation program may benefit the town when applying for state support.

Roger Arnold commented that he now saw why a wastewater committee was needed. Chair Horowitz reminded the meeting that recent action around the Open Meeting Law (OML) involved the unwinding of a planning commission wastewater working group, and that the experience would likely make the commission very reluctant to initiate something similar.

Commissioners continued their discussion and then asked that Francis draft a project management document that included a timeline with any known submission deadlines, known requirements for receiving state support for a study, and technical information needed to complete any application for support of a study. Francis responded that he could have a rough draft prepared by January, 2021.

7. Update from the Affordable Housing Committee:

Lubell informed the meeting about recent work by the Affordable Housing Subcommittee:

- Exploring opportunities for using public lands for a public housing project. The group has encountered some issues associated with conservation restrictions and wastewater challenges, but continues to look
- An Op-Ed about Affordable Housing appeared recently in the *Valley News*
- The subcommittee will be working on an FAQ about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- There have been fruitful conversations between members of the Subcommittee and Upper Valley Land Trust about how to pursue the twin goals of affordable housing and land conservation

8. Discuss process and policies for the Planning Commission: Deferred

9. Other Business: None

10. Future Meeting Schedule & Agendas

- Wastewater study outline
- Discussion of processes and policies for the Planning Commission

11. Public Comment: None

Meeting adjourned: 8:34pm

Future Meetings:

Thursday, January 28, 6:30pm Regular Meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Rod Francis