

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION
Thursday March 4, 2021, 6:30pm

MINUTES

Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85037446838>

Meeting ID: 850 3744 6838

Members Present: Melissa Horwitz (C), Brian Loeb, Jaci Allen, Jeff Lubell, Leah Romano, Ernie Ciccotelli, Jeff Goodrich
Public Present: Mary Layton, Stuart Richards, Linda Cook, Roger Arnold, Claudette Brochu, Jamie Teague, Hannah Tyler, Linda Gray, Robert Gere, Neil Odell, Tom Candon
Staff: Rod Francis

Meeting Opened: 6:33pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Lubell moved and Romano seconded a motion to approve the Agenda as amended by merging items seven (PC members questions and thoughts on wastewater issues) and eight (Continued discussion with Planning Director on wastewater issues). Motion carried 5 — 0 — 1.

2. Meeting Objectives:

- Appoint Planning Commission Member to Article 36 Energy Task Force
- Discussion of wastewater issues
- Update from Tom Candon (MCS Board Chair) on wastewater

3. Public Comment: Goodrich asked to be recognized as a member of the public and then told the meeting that any hate speech directed towards him would cause him to leave the meeting.

Stuart Richards asked for clarification of the time allotted at the end of the meeting for public comment. Chair Horwitz confirmed that the time set was 15 minutes.

4. Review and approve Minutes January 28, 2021:

Allen moved and Romano seconded a motion to approve the minutes of January 28, 2021. Motion carried 6 — 0 — 1.

5. Announcements, Reports, Updates & Correspondence:

- **Correspondence:** Lubell asked that a memo he circulated via email to Commissioners after the packet was posted be included in the record of the meeting.

Goodrich moved and Loeb seconded a motion to include the Lubell memo in the packet for this meeting. Motion carried 7 — 0.

- **Updates:** none

6. Appoint Planning Commission Member to Article 36 Energy Task Force:

Chair Horwitz introduced the item by reading Article 36. Ciccotelli expressed interest Loeb moved and Lubell seconded a motion to recommend the Selectboard appoint Ciccotelli to the Energy Task Force. Goodrich commented that he was not going to support the motion if the Commission will not follow Open Meeting Law. Motion carried 6 — 1.

7. Discussion of wastewater issues (including updates from Tom Candon, NSD):

Tom Candon, Chair of the Norwich School District (NSD) updated the meeting on work by NSD to resolve ongoing on-site wastewater issues at Marion Cross School (MCS). Three options have been investigated a) replacing the system *in-situ* b) using the adjoining Piesch parcel c) processing wastewater at the Dresden School district playing fields and d) connecting to the Hartford municipal system. Testing of the Village Green (part of the MCS property) has been conducted by Jeff Goodrich of Pathways Consulting and Steve Revell of Lincoln Applied Geology. Recently effort has been directed at keeping lines of communication open. Examples of this include

attending the Town of Hartford Selectboard meeting on February 9, 2021 where the Selectboard was considering whether or not to continue discussions on the content of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Hartford and NSD. The MOU was intended to layout the roles and obligations of the parties with regard to a proposal from NSD to establish a forcemain that would connect MCS, The Hanover Coop Service Center, King Arthur Baking (KAB) and the Norwich Commerce Park (Foggs) to the Hartford sewer service at Olcott Drive. The Hartford Selectboard communicated an expectation that any further discussions would require a commitment to an inter-municipal agreement between Hartford and the Town of Norwich.

Candon outlined that other proposals were still under consideration including using Dresden playing fields as a site for processing waste.

Allen suggested it is now clear that the Town of Norwich and NSD need to work together.

Lubell identified broader questions this proposal raised connected to town plan policies and action items such as ensuring more housing that is affordable to more people. He emphasized the opportunity for synergy between NSD and the town. The right response to this issue could achieve multiple objectives for Norwich. It is therefore important to hold off on making a final decision on may inter-municipal agreement. We should reach out to the Hartford Planning Commission to discuss planning issues in common.

Chair Horwitz asked for clarification on how and if the Planning Commission is going to work with NSD with regard to other options for solving the MCS wastewater problem. Lubell replied that other options could come out of continued dialogue.

Loeb said that he was happy to pursue a quick solution, but that if the “Hartford solution” was going to be pursued it would be better to broaden the scope of the project to make it more appealing to Hartford.

Goodrich identified two properties (Unitarian Church and Kid’s Place) in Norwich that are currently connected to the Hartford municipal sewer.

Romano thanked all the people who brought information to the discussion. She agreed that the best, appropriately timed solutions should be pursued. She went on to identify a series of process questions that would need to be addressed if the Planning Commission was to make a recommendation to the Planning Commission.

Francis outlined that the document he included in the packet was a more formal restatement of issues he raised at the last meeting. The document under review identifies key “pieces of the puzzle” and includes four maps, one representing the NSD proposal and alternatives that suggest possible solutions to addressing the MCS wastewater issue while achieving broader goals identified in the town plan that would be examined in a formal wastewater study.

Lubell restated his interest in fostering communication between the two towns, Norwich and Hartford.

Allen expressed concerns about the identified funding sources and suggested that this issue needs more attention.

Romano suggested that we need to continue to ask questions to fill in other “pieces of the puzzle”. And be prepared to build a FAQ or something similar to inform the public.

Loeb asked for comments from Teague and Candon on the suggestion to broaden out the NSD proposal.

Candon expressed frustration with the lack of prior consultation between Francis the NSD and SAU. He went on to acknowledge that there were concerns expressed in the Hartford meeting with regard to “opening the floodgates”. Candon expressed a hope that conversations will take place with the new Town Manager and new Selectboard in Hartford.

Candon acknowledged that if the connection to Harford is not feasible other options will be explored. He suggested that he would be appreciative of the Planning Commission withholding making a recommendation to the Norwich Selectboard now.

Lubell asked Candon if there was a possibility of discussing a re-conceptualized project that would come about from recognizing shared interests between the Town of Norwich and the NSD. Candon responded that he can’t answer this until he hears from the new Hartford Town Manager and Selectboard.

Francis outlined his responsibilities with regard to providing planning support to the Town through reporting to the Selectboard and then the Selectboard and reminded the Planning Commission that the public policy concerns raised by the proposal.

Lubell expressed disappointment that NSD was not open to contemplating a broader solution.

Teague replied that to broaden discussions would require Candon to go back to the full board.

8. Other Business: None

9. Public Comment: Roger Arnold acknowledged the frustration surrounding how the conversation on wastewater has come about. He then urged meeting participants to remember that the embracing of conflict and working through issues in this way is an example of good governance.

Stuart Richards thanked Jamie Teague and Tom Candon for all their work.

Meeting adjourned: 8:30pm

Future Meetings:

Thursday, March 25, 6:30pm Regular Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Rod Francis

APPROVED 04-13-2021