

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION  
Tuesday April 12, 2022, 6:30pm

MINUTES

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Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89339717735>

Meeting ID: 893 3971 7735

Members Present: Jaci Allen, Brian Loeb, Ernie Ciccotelli, Jeff Lubell, Jeff Goodrich  
Public Present: Andrea Day, Linda Cook, Darren Marcy, Max Villanueva, Claudette Brochu  
Staff: Rod Francis

**Meeting Opened:** 6:33pm

**1. Approve Agenda:**

Allen moved and Ciccotelli seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried 5 – 0. For: Allen, Loeb, Horwitz, Ciccotelli, Lubell, Goodrich.

**2. Public Comment:** none

**3. Wastewater Feasibility Study**

Francis introduced Andrea Day representing Dufresne Group, the lead for the consultant team awarded the contract for the Wastewater Feasibility Study. Day outlined the proposed schedule and the scope of tasks which includes conducting surveys of property owners in the study area.

Loeb asked about the makeup and formation of the Advisory Committee intended to support the work of the consultants. Francis and Day confirmed that a successful Advisory Committee comprised a good cross-section of the community, interested residents, commercial property owners, and could include some Planning Commissioners.

Day explained that the Study could identify a range of possible outcomes. The geological work will be able to show any potential for wastewater management and then relate this information to the goals of the community, providing the basis for a needs assessment. Day confirmed for Lubell that the community's interest in having a wastewater solution would be established through factual information and reference to the stated goals of the community, such as the Town Plan.

Goodrich commented that he remained unclear about the purpose of the study, but that he hoped local people with knowledge can be part of the Advisory Committee. Day responded that it helps to have people with local knowledge including business operators, septic designers and installers and others. A range of perspectives better inform the work. Allen noted that local people involved in construction and real estate may have relevant experience.

**4. Density Study**

Francis introduced a series of maps which he described as showing a lack of strong association between the density factor tool and the settlement pattern since the time of its adoption. Although the sample size is small (unavoidable given the rate of development and the total number of parcels), there is strong evidence of land mergers (the opposite of subdivision) taking place on paved roads within 1.5 miles of the village, most likely taking advantage of distant views and other amenities. This pattern runs counter to the purpose of the density factor tool, intended to intensify development closer to the village and on paved roads. Possible factors explaining the outcome include the effect of the State of Vermont current use program (reducing taxes significantly on parcels over 25 acres) and reacting to local property assessments by formally merging parcels to avoid being assessed for owning more than one 'homestead' eligible property. Francis also noted the extremely low rate of growth in housing units and the low household size (2.2 persons), suggesting an overall increase in the presence of non-permanent resident households.

Goodrich suggested that the larger parcels in the periphery were evidence of the density factor working and that the lack of development near the village was a symptom of the challenges with wastewater.

Ciccotelli asked about the status of the parcel mergers illustrated by the data. Francis offered to confirm the data used.

Allen noted that this work would be helpful in educating people about the impact of current use.

**5. Draft Land Use Regs (LUR) Administrative Procedures**

Allen presented results to three key questions from the Administrative Procedures section. The questions related to:

- The distinction between minor and major renovations
- The difference between variance and a waiver
- The waiver process and the role of the DRB

Francis explained that the distinction between a major and minor renovation was important for properties in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), language that the town had little ability to amend, and potentially commercial and institutional properties where there was also a change of use proposed. In general, for residential property in Norwich the only trigger for a zoning permit is a change to the footprint of a structure. Consequently, a residential building can have a major renovation and not need a zoning permit if there are no changes to external dimensions.

Goodrich suggested that commissioners needed to understand the existing rules and then look at the relationship between the ZA and the DRB as a set of policy issues.

**6. Draft LUR General Section**

Commissioners discussed the most effective way to engage with this section. Francis recommended that commissioners use the notes document included with the draft section as a guide to language that is 'locked' (set by statute), or open to amendment, suggesting that there is a policy question to be resolved.

Lubell suggested that he would like to see a commitment to affordable housing included in the purpose statement section.

After discussion commissioners agreed to submit any comments or questions to Allen by April 25, 2022.

**7. Announcements, Reports, Updates, and Correspondence**

Allen noted the correspondence in the packet from Amy Springer.

**8. Approve Minutes of March 8, 2021:**

Goodrich moved and Allen seconded a motion to approve the minutes of 02/08/2022. Motion carried 5 – 0. For: Allen, Loeb, Ciccotelli, Lubell, Goodrich.

**9. Other Business:** none

**10. Future Meeting Schedule**

May – Density Study Follow Up

**11. Comments from the Public:** none

**12. Meeting adjourned: 8:40pm**

**Future Meetings:**

**Tuesday May 10, Regular Meeting**

**Tuesday June 14, 2022 Regular Meeting**

Respectfully submitted,

Rod Francis

APROVED 06-14-2022