

**NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION
AGENDA**

Thursday, May 28, 2020, Town Zoom Meeting
NOTE START TIME 6:30pm

Act 92 Compliant Zoom Meeting Details

Topic: Planning Commission

Time: May 28, 2020 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86340389705?pwd=UTk2Mk1ldWNsUUc3cithTTRqRWg5dz09>

Meeting ID: 863 4038 9705

Password: 777025

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,86340389705#,,1#,777025# US (Chicago)

+19292056099,,86340389705#,,1#,777025# US (New York)

Telephone:

888 475 4499 US Toll-free

877 853 5257 US Toll-free

Meeting ID: 863 4038 9705

Password: 777025

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86340389705?pwd=UTk2Mk1ldWNsUUc3cithTTRqRWg5dz09>

Regular Meeting:

1. Approve Agenda
2. Meeting Objectives:
 - Discuss draft of scoping document for update of town wastewater study
 - Review draft of Town Plan action item assignments and next steps
 - Elect officers
3. Comments from the Public
4. Elect chair, vice chair, and secretary
5. Review and approve Minutes 4-23-20

6. Announcements, Reports, Updates & Correspondence
 - Correspondence
 - i. xxx
 - Updates
 - i. TRORC
 - ii. Selectboard
 - iii. Affordable Housing Subcommittee
 - iv. CRS membership
 - Reports
7. Discuss draft of scoping document for town wastewater study update
8. Review draft of Town Plan action item assignments and next steps
9. Other Business
10. Future Meeting Schedule & Agendas
11. Comments from the Public

Future Meetings:

Thursday, June 25, 6:30pm Regular Meeting

Thursday, July 23, 6:30pm Regular Meeting

Thursday, August 27, 6:30pm Regular Meeting



roderick francis <norwichvtplanner@gmail.com>

FW: Bait and Switch

1 message

Rod Francis <RFrancis@norwich.vt.us>

Tue, May 19, 2020 at 11:08 AM

To: "norwichvtplanner@gmail.com" <norwichvtplanner@gmail.com>

Planning & Zoning
Town of Norwich, VT

----- Original message -----

From: Stuart Richards <stuartrichards50@gmail.com>

Date: 5/19/20 11:00 (GMT-05:00)

To: Herb Durfee <HDurfee@norwich.vt.us>

Cc: Rod Francis <RFrancis@norwich.vt.us>

Subject: FW: Bait and Switch

Herb,

I had asked that the email below be included in Selectboard and Planning Commission correspondence for their next meetings. Have you received my request and will the email below be included in correspondence for both the Selectboard and Planning Commission for their next meetings?

Thanks,

Stuart

Dear Readers,

Our Norwich Selectboard and Planning Commission clearly have a problem. First, the SB advertised for 2 positions available on the Planning Commission as shown in the link below, then they decided to ignore the two applications they received timely and two other applications that came in after the stated deadline. Why did the SB advertise two positions that might not even be available? Didn't they realize that eliminating two positions by reducing the number of PC commissioners from 9-7 AFTER THEY ADVERTISED TWO OPEN POSITIONS would or could affect members of the public who might wish to apply in the future? Didn't they realize how bad this makes them look. These comments do not apply to Claudette Brochu, SB Chair, who was the sole dissenting vote against reducing the size of the PC after the fact.

<http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/OpenPositions-0520.pdf>.

Ernie Ciccotelli is apparently the sole member of the PC with differing opinions. He explains why Jaci Allen, Chair of

the PC lobbied the Selectboard to reduce the size of the PC in his email below. You can either believe Ernie or Jaci's explanation. Jaci says it's too cumbersome to have 2 more members on the PC, notwithstanding that there have been two more members for the last year. It should be noted that the two extremely well qualified applicants turned down by the SB were former Selectboard Chair and Norwich Citizen of the Year, Linda Cook and Doug Wilberding, who has deployed through his private equity firm millions of dollars for affordable housing. What a shame that these two were not appointed so that they could contribute their knowledge and expertise to the PC.

In another irrational move by the SB it is unknown why the SB advertised for an open position on the Finance Committee and then proceeded to ignore the one application from Pam Smith for the Finance Committee that was received timely.

I ask that the Selectboard reconsider their action to reduce the size of the PC and increase it back to 9 and that they appoint Linda Cook and Doug Wilberding to the PC. In addition, I ask that the SB appoint Pam Smith to the Finance Committee.

Herb and Rod please make this email a part of SB and PC correspondence.

Stuart Richards

Letter to the Select Board Regarding Planning Commission Membership – 7 or 9?

April 16, 2020

To the Norwich Select Board:

It has been brought to my attention that there is, again, discussion to reduce the membership of the Norwich Planning Commission from 9 members to 7. The number of members of the Commission must remain at 9. That number is small enough as it is, given the importance, the breadth, and the depth of the decisions the Commission makes and policies that the Commission sets on behalf of the citizens of the Town, present and future. If the number is reduced to 7, it is likely that a number of important policies will be set by as few as 4 people.

It is likely that an argument for reducing the membership of the Planning Commission will be that obtaining a quorum is difficult and that finding enough people to fill all 9 seats is difficult. This is something of a straw man argument. As a practical matter, if the membership is 9 but not all seats are filled, the Commission can still function so long as quorum is met. The fact that the quorum is larger for 9 than for 7 is not as important as some would believe, because the issues decided by the Commission are critically important to the Town, and they should be decided by the largest and most diverse group of citizens possible.

Not only is it important to have the membership remain at 9, but it is important to assure that the membership of the Commission is as diverse as possible. In the past, appointments to the Commission were based on a candidate's ability and willingness to avoid challenging the status quo and to support the quest for uniformity of thought and unanimity of votes on matters of importance taken up by the Commission. But the quest for uniformity and unanimity is pointless and a disservice to the community, not just the Planning Commission but on any policy making panel. The Planning Commission is intended to be a deliberative body, where different, competing ideas are presented, debated, negotiated, compromised and settled. The more ideas applied to a problem means a higher likelihood of a higher quality of resolution of the problem. If the Commission membership is reduced, the amount of ideas is reduced thereby reducing the quality of policies based on those ideas. The fewer the members there are on the Planning Commission, the less proposals there are, and the less consideration of different approaches to resolving a problem or an issue in order to obtain the best possible resolution there will be.

If possible, the people appointed to the commission should have divergent outlooks, instead of the current practice of appointing people that similar, uniform opinions, so that we have a deliberative body that actually deliberates the substantive issues rather than just process, and so that the outcomes produced by the Commission are not made by the top and simply rubber stamped by the rest of the Commission, as is the current practice. Right now, the Planning Commission does not deliberate and there is little dissent, which leads to near unanimous decisions that falsely give

the impression that the Planning Commission has considered multiple approaches to determine the single best resolution of any particular issue.

The current Chair of the Planning Commission has been agitating to have the number reduced to 7 since increasing the membership to 9 was first considered. As a matter of practice, during meetings where discussion is taking place, the current Chair never focuses on the area around the table where those who dissent or are independent are sitting, and when they are noticed, they are usually the last to talk unless one of the Chair's favorites is going to counter them after which the matter is closed without allowing the dissenters to rebut. Dissenting opinions are ignored or actively criticized and excoriated. There should be no doubt that dissenting or independent thinking members will be the first to be axed if the Select Board reduces the membership of the Commission.

In short, the Norwich Planning Commission is not healthy, and it is not doing its job properly, and reducing the membership of the Planning Commission will not improve the situation.

Thank you for considering retaining 9 members on the Planning Commission

Ernie Ciccotelli (Member Norwich Planning Commission)

Claudette,

I agree with you. The number of PC members must remain 9. Also your logic regarding the issue of not having the PC fully populated is impeccable. The fewer the number on the PC, the less deliberation and the less proposals and consideration of multiple approaches to resolving a problem in order to obtain the best possible resolution. If possible, the people appointed to the commission should have divergent outlooks, instead of the current practice of appointing people that similar, uniform opinions, so that we have a deliberative body that actually deliberates the substantive issues not just process, and so that the outcomes produced by the Commission are not made by the top and simply rubber stamped by the rest of the Commission, as is the current practice. Right now the PC does not deliberate and there is little dissension, which leads to unanimous or near unanimous decisions that falsely give the impression that the PC has considered multiple approaches to determine the single best resolution of any particular issue.

Jaci has been agitating to have the number reduced to 7 literally since I was appointed, and I have no doubt that I would have been the first person to be axed had the SB agreed with her. It's not just me that she has a problem with either. Anyone who dissents is disregarded. As a matter of practice, I have noticed that during a meeting where discussion is taking place, Jaci never focuses on the area around the table where Jeff Goodrich or I am sitting, and when we are noticed, we are usually the last to talk unless one of her favorites is going to counter us after which the matter is closed without allowing us to rebut.

Frankly, the Norwich Planning Commission is not healthy, and it is not doing its job properly.

and the less deliberation there is, and the less proposals and consideration of multiple approaches to resolving a problem in order to obtain the best possible resolution conform to a desire to behave on the Commission in a manner intended to show unanimity and uniformity in the Commission's decisions, uniformity and unanimity. The search for unanimity and uniformity is pointless and a disservice to the community. The Planning Commission is essentially a legislative body, not executive. It sets policy, it does not execute or enforce it.



roderick francis <norwichvtplanner@gmail.com>

FW: MARION CROSS WASTEWATER SYSTEM UPDATE \$\$\$\$

1 message

Stuart Richards <stuartlrichards50@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 29, 2020 at 12:19 PM

To: Rod Francis <RFrancis@norwich.vt.us>, roderick francis <norwichvtplanner@gmail.com>

Cc: Jaci Allen <allenjaci@gmail.com>

Rod, Please put the email below and the attachment in correspondence for the next PC meeting.

Thank you,

Stuart

From: Stuart Richards <stuartlrichards50@gmail.com>

Date: Thursday, April 16, 2020 at 11:59 AM

To: Norwich Listserv <norwich@lists.vitalcommunities.org>

Subject: MARION CROSS WASTEWATER SYSTEM UPDATE \$\$\$\$

Dear Readers,

I hope that this note finds everyone safe and healthy. Without question our first priority for the repair/replacement of the MCS wastewater system is the health and safety of our children, staff and public. Our school board and administrators are expending great efforts to accomplish this goal in addition to being fiscally responsible by carefully examining the possibilities for repair/replacement of the existing system on the Green as well as considering 2 other alternatives – hookup to Hartford and piping to the Dresden fields employing an Eco Machine to treat waste, similar to what has been in use at the Sharon rest stop. It is too soon to say which of these possibilities is the best alternative.

The most recent Norwich School Board meeting on April 1, provided updated information about progress that is being made to repair/replace the 30 year old failed Marion Cross waste water system. You can view the School Board meeting by going to:

CATV: <http://catv.cablecast.tv/CablecastPublicSite/show/11606?channel=1&seekto=5231> The septic discussion starts at 1:27:11. A number of questions are answered in the discussion. The Board will be meeting monthly to discuss the continuing testing and other efforts.

The goal appears to be to conclude all work in a way that allows voters to approve the necessary expenses, yet to be determined, by next Town Meeting day. Most of the work done by the Board to date has focused on repairing or replacing the existing system on the Green. So far the primary causes of the current system's failure are thought to be freeze-ups during the winter months, high water table and broken piping. The reasons for failure are still being analyzed and there are hydrological studies ongoing. If anyone reading this is aware of effluent surfacing or smells in

other than the winter months it would be very helpful if you would make this information available to the School Board. If there is evidence of system failures in other than the winter months additional explanation and or remediation methods may need to be sought.

The School Board has created a webpage on the SAU70 website where it is posting information related to the assessment: <https://www.sau70.org/departments/facilities/norwich-septic-project> All Norwich School Board meetings can be viewed on CATV and minutes are available via BoardDocs through the SAU70 website: <https://www.sau70.org/school-boards>

The cost of repair/replacement of the existing system is a big issue. It's unclear whether this will be hundreds of thousands of dollars or millions. For those interested in engineering opinions it may be helpful to review Pathways letter dated 11/4/19 at <https://tinyurl.com/v7o8tjw> In addition, I'm awaiting an update on analysis costs for Pathways' work and other work. Past work on this project has amounted to around \$47,000.00.

Norwich voters recently approved an increase of \$621,474 for the year 20-21 for the MCS, Richmond School and HHS broken down as follows:

Marion Cross School – 5.99% increase - \$351,163.00

Richmond School and Hanover High School - 4.17% increase – 270,311

Total Increase = 10.16% - \$621,474.00

Voters also approved \$3,000,000 (including interest) for the Tracy Hall energy renovation in Article 8. There is a revote on this expense scheduled in August. There will also be large amounts needed to fix our road system. The constantly increasing spending is worrisome especially when it comes at a time when people are getting laid off or having to work reduced hours but even if this were not happening it's essential that Norwich be fiscally prudent. In 2000 Norwich's population was 3544 today it's around 3300. I've lived here for 36 years and it seems to me that Norwich has become a very expensive place to live and that we're driving out native Vermonters, blue collar, hourly workers and single parents among others. At the same time that we make Norwich unaffordable we keep talking about affordable housing. Yet no one saw fit to publicly support a recent effort to build 7 affordable units in Norwich. Personally, I miss many friends who have been forced to move because they couldn't afford to live here. Don't you think it's time to ungate Norwich?

All the best,

Stuart Richards

802-649-3928



MCS Pathways Report 11-4-19 .pdf
122K