

Town of Norwich | Planning Commission Agenda | March 14, 2023 | 7pm |

ZOOM access information:

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

888 475 4499 US Toll-free

877 853 5257 US Toll-free

Meeting ID: 893 3971 7735

Agenda Item	Action	Packet Materials	Estimated Start/End
1. Approve Agenda	Chair will ask Commission to change/reorder agenda items		7:00-7:05
2. Public Comment	Public invited to speak to any item not on the agenda		7:05-7:10
3. Update on FEMA Flood Maps and By-laws	Discussion	FEMA flood map updates	7:10 – 7:30
4. Announcements, Updates, Correspondence, AHSC update	Comments and questions	Links to: Draft Strafford Town Plan http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Sharon_PublicHearing_TownPlan_Documents.pdf	7:30 – 7:45
5. Approve Minutes of 2/06/23	Approve minutes. Motion req.	Minutes 2/6/23	7:45 – 7:50
6. Other Business	Raise any other topics		7:50 – 7:55
7. Future Meeting Schedule and Agendas	Discussion		7:55 – 8:00
9. Public Comment			
10. Adjourn	Motion required.		

Future Meetings:

April 11, 2023

May 9, 2023

Encl: Draft PC Minutes, February 6, 2023
FEMA flood map updates

FEMA FLOOD MAPS ARE CHANGING

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

Background

Most towns throughout Vermont have adopted Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) bylaws. These bylaws help protect towns by limiting risky development within the floodplain and floodway, but permit development with higher flood safety standards such as elevated structures and flood-resistant materials. Many towns adopted their Flood Hazard Area bylaws decades ago, and these bylaws are based on old maps that do not reflect the flood risk that towns experience today. As such, FEMA is undertaking the process of updating these flood maps throughout Vermont. When these maps go into effect, towns must have SFHA bylaws that meet the current FEMA standards in order for property owners to be able to purchase or renew flood insurance through the [National Flood Insurance Program](#). Bylaws that do not meet the standards put property owners at greater risk.

This briefing paper will provide towns with current information on how these maps will be changing and the steps your town may need to take to ensure its flood bylaws remain compliant with NFIP standards.

How are the FEMA maps different?

The new maps will be more accurate, and are based on new computer modeling and high-resolution elevation data that was not available when the current maps were produced. [These maps will show the flood hazard area in greater detail](#), and may show smaller streams within the floodplain.

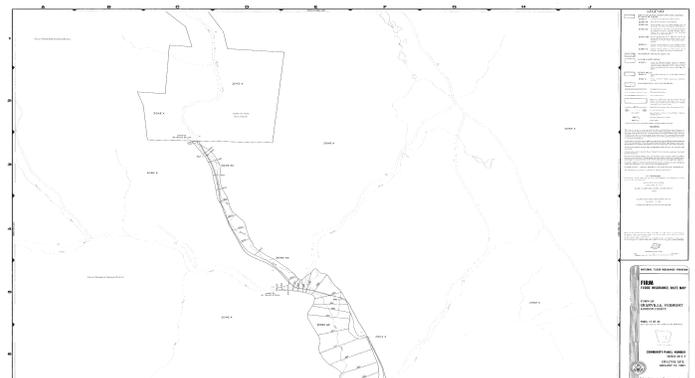


Damage to a bridge following Tropical Storm Irene

Which towns need to adopt new flood bylaws?

If towns recently updated their SFHA bylaws, there may be few or no changes needed. However, many bylaws may benefit from minor changes that will increase safety.

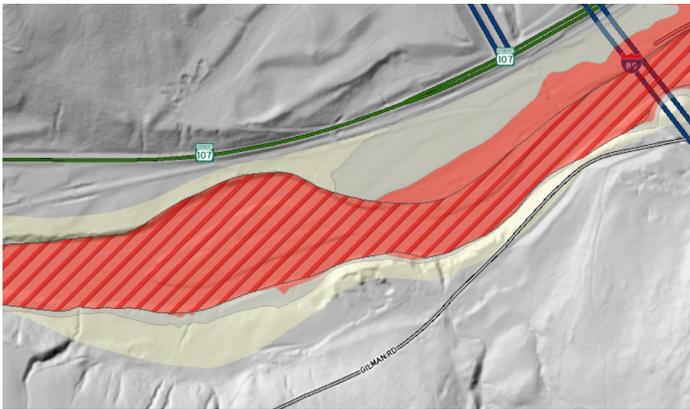
Towns should reach out to their Regional Planning Commission and/or their [Regional Floodplain Manager](#) on whether an extensive update is needed.



FIRM map for Granville VT. These early maps are often difficult to read and may not capture all areas susceptible to flooding.

Are these bylaws the same as River Corridor Bylaws?

[Special Flood Hazard Areas](#) and [River Corridors](#) are different, though both serve to protect public and private infrastructure from damage caused by flooding and [both may be incorporated into the same bylaw](#). FEMA-approved SFHA bylaws ensure towns are compliant with the National Flood Insurance Program and allow residents to purchase [flood insurance](#). River corridor bylaws are not required for flood insurance, but they provide towns with an extra layer of flood protection from erosion-based hazards and allow towns to qualify for the highest State match in ERAF funding.



Notice the Flood Hazard Area (Red and Hatch) and the River Corridor area (beige). River Corridors anticipate where the river may move over time, thus protecting those areas from future flood risk.

What resources are out there for my town?

Fortunately, many resources for towns have already been developed in preparation for the new flood maps. Check out [the State of Vermont Flood Training](#) website for a step-by-step guide on what actions your municipality may need to take.

See also the [About Floods](#) page on the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission website for links to other flood resources.



Floods can be devastating, and can be costly for towns and homeowners. Access to flood insurance and strong flood regulations can make communities safer and mitigate flooding impacts.

My town is interested in updating its flood hazard bylaws. Where do we begin?

Reach out to your Regional Planning Commission (RPC). RPCs are available to assist towns on a wide range of projects, and the staff at RPCs are knowledgeable in what resources are available and can direct inquiries to provide timely and relevant feedback.

RPCs can assist select towns with updating their flood hazard bylaws. The resources and availability of staff will vary by RPC, so check with your RPC to see how they may assist you in this update.

If your town is interested in updating its bylaw, contact Kyle Katz.

Email: kkatz@trorc.org

Phone: 802 457 3188 ext. 3005

In the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Region, TRORC will be able to assist towns with:

1. Developing a timeline for when the town should begin the update process.
2. Holding meetings to engage towns around this important process and reviewing draft maps (if available).
3. Working with towns to strengthen their bylaws, and assist in drafting revisions to the Special Flood Hazard Area regulations and adopting river corridor bylaws.
4. Assistance in the adoption process.

Additional Links to key resources:

[Get Ready for New FEMA Flood Maps](#): A step-by-step guide for towns on the maps rollout process.

The [No Adverse Impact](#) approach to flood hazard mitigation.

[River Corridors](#): What are they and why are they important to consider when planning for future development.

[The Annotated Model Bylaws](#) developed by the Department of Conservation provides municipalities with model language that exceeds the NFIP requirements.

[Emergency Relief Assistance Fund \(ERAF\)](#): What is it and why is it important for my community.

[Expanded Community Reports](#): See how much ERAF funding your community qualifies for.



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Understanding Flood Hazard Bylaws

What they are and why they are important

Floods have always shaped the natural landscape, and they will continue to do so. The most frequent cause of flooding is heavy rains, but flooding can also result from melting snow, ice jams, or dam failures. Flooding and flash flooding can happen at any time of year and can impact homes and businesses anywhere, even outside of traditionally flood-prone areas. Flooding is a common occurrence in nature, and first started to be seen as disasters when humans began settling in flood-prone areas. Flooding is the region's and the state's most prominent hazard, and is the most likely to cause damage to property and loss of life in Vermont. With most Vermont communities at some risk of flooding, it is important to examine the ways in which communities can protect lives, property, and infrastructure through the tools available: flood regulations and river corridor bylaws.



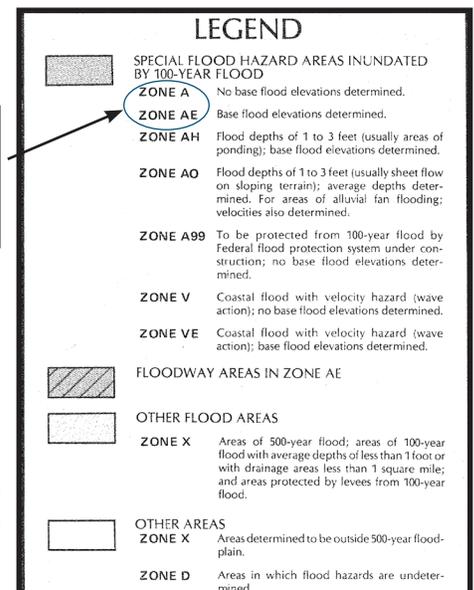
The White River overflowing its banks in Stockbridge

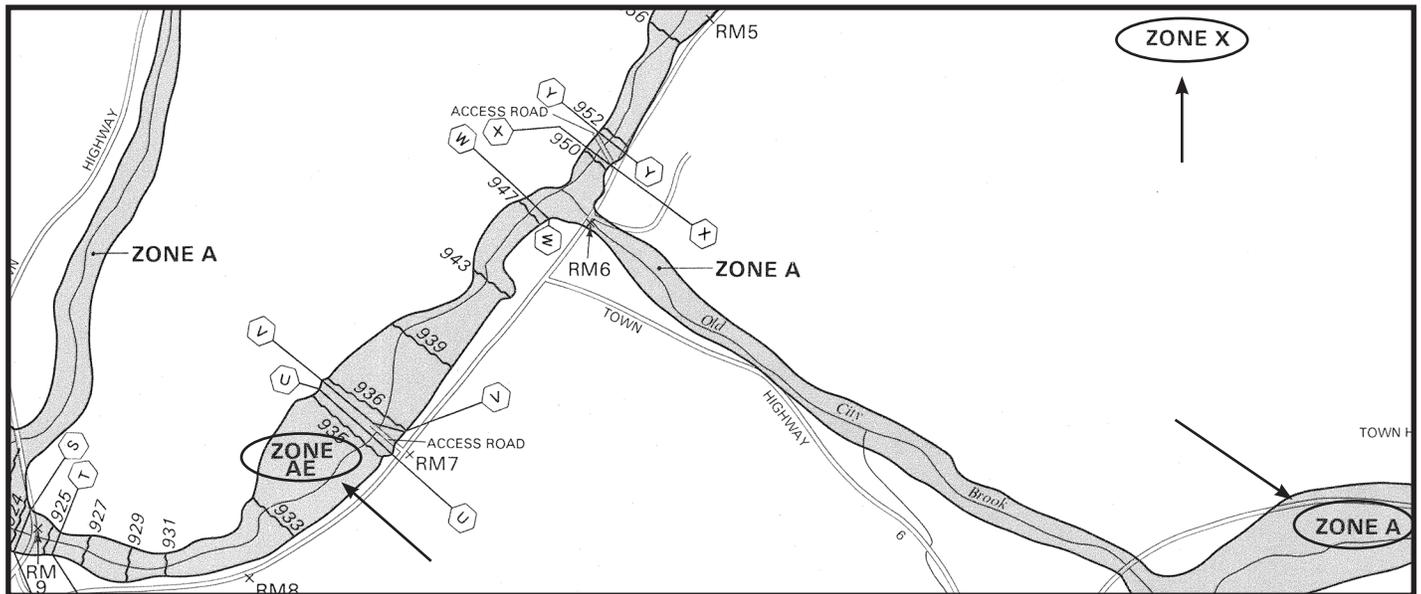
Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA)

Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) are the areas of base flood shown on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). Base flood, also known as a "100-year flood" has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. The Special Flood Hazard Area is shown on the FIRMs as zones. The most common zones for communities in the TRORC region are Zone A and Zone AE, though other zones, such as Zone X and Zone B may be shown on the map as well. Most towns will have A zones: areas of flood hazard where the [base flood elevation \(BFE\)](#) is not known. Some towns, particularly those on major river corridors such as the White River, Ompompanoosuc, Ottauquechee, and Waits River will have some AE zones: areas where BFE is known. AE zones are more detailed study areas than A zones, and provide a higher degree of accuracy. Depending on the level of detail, AE zones may also include a mapped Floodway.

Zones A and AE are the most common within the TRORC region.

Zones provided in the legend for an early, non-digital FIRM.

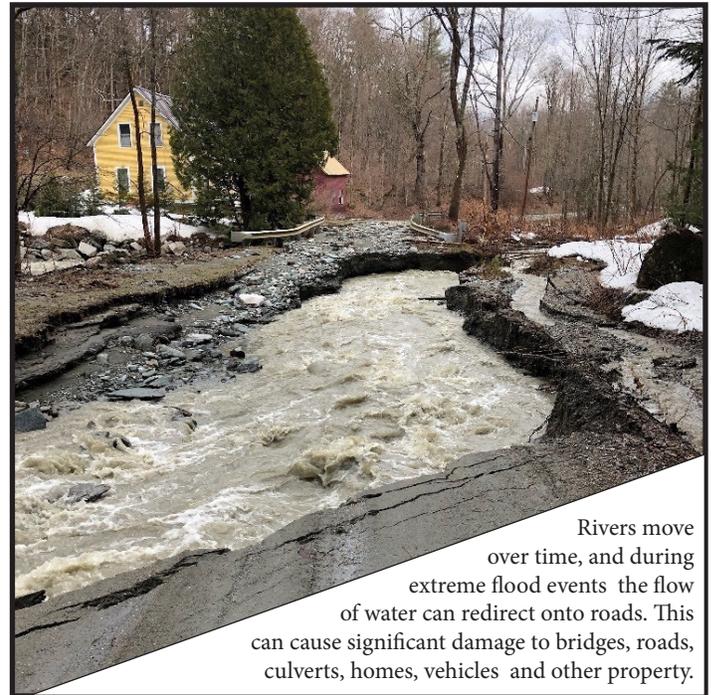




This close-up image of an early FIRM shows mapped zones A, AE, and X. Zone X includes areas outside of the 500-year floodplain. Properties in Zone X may still be at risk of flooding, despite appearing outside of the mapped flood hazard area.

River Corridors

While SFHA bylaws regulate areas within the mapped zones on a town's FIRM, [River Corridors](#) may provide an additional layer of protection for homes, utilities, and infrastructure from the natural movement of a river or stream over time. Watercourses are not static: they move and meander over time. River Corridor bylaws essentially allow for this lateral movement to take place, by regulating development in the space in which the river will move over time. Most towns in our region do not have enacted River Corridor bylaws, there is also not a federal or state requirement for towns to do so. However, all towns do have River Corridors that are mapped on the Agency of Natural Resources [Natural Resources Atlas](#).



Rivers move over time, and during extreme flood events the flow of water can redirect onto roads. This can cause significant damage to bridges, roads, culverts, homes, vehicles and other property.

What are Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs)?

FIRMs are the maps developed by FEMA to show the areas of a flood hazard for a given community. These maps identify the areas subject to the Special Flood Hazard Bylaws that towns must adopt to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. Many FIRMs in the TRORC region were last updated digitally in 2005. However, the FIRM for many towns is often still a paper map last revised in the 1990s (see the [FEMA Flood Map Service Center](#) for a copy of your town's FIRM). FEMA is currently updating the FIRMs across Vermont, and this will affect which areas of town will be regulated by the SFHA bylaws.

River Corridors continued...

River Corridor bylaws can protect public and private property in numerous ways. Importantly, it can prevent new development from occurring where it may eventually become problematic, as the river shifts and meanders over time. Towns can incorporate River Corridors directly into their SFHA bylaws, expanding the areas protected by ensuring development is better insulated from the erosive impacts of river and stream flooding.

Beyond the increased protection that River Corridors provide, there is also a monetary incentive worth considering. The [Emergency Relief Assistance Fund](#) (ERAF) provides towns with substantial federal and state funding following a federally-declared disaster. However, towns that take specific actions to address hazard mitigation, such as adopting a hazard mitigation plan or river corridor bylaws, will be eligible for a higher rate of ERAF funding if a disaster does occur. Major disasters can cause hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage. A town-wide disaster costing \$500,000 dollars could save the town \$25,000 in additional costs if it has adopted River Corridor bylaws and all other ERAF requirements are met.

Having strong flood regulations is important for many reasons. Carefully considered bylaws can mitigate the damage to homes, businesses, and utilities within areas susceptible to flooding. They can also regulate new development, to ensure that new growth does not increase the flood risks of surrounding property.



Streams and rivers can have tremendous erosive force when large volumes of water are moving at high velocity. Streambank erosion can put roads and homes at significant risk.

Over the next several years, flood bylaws should be reviewed to ensure they provide the strongest protection possible. Even if the bylaw was enacted recently, there may be ways to tighten the language to provide greater protection for property owners inside and outside the floodplain. The adoption of a River Corridor Bylaw should also be seriously considered. A well-crafted flood hazard and river corridor bylaw can protect current and future property, minimize damage costs in future flood events through smart development, and ensure that new development will not have an adverse effect on the community as a whole.

If your town is interested in updating its flood hazard bylaw, contact Kyle Katz

**Email: kkatz@trorc.org
Phone: 802 457 3188 ext. 3005**



Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee
REGIONAL COMMISSION

trorc.org

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION

Monday, February 6, 2023, 7:00pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82555248288>

Meeting ID: 825 5524 8288

Members Present: Jaci Allen, Brian Loeb, Ernie Ciccotelli, Marc Aquila, Vince Crow, Melissa Horwitz, Jeff Goodrich

Public: Jaan Laaspere, Stuart Richards, Jeff Lubell

Meeting Opened: 7:01 pm

1. Approve Agenda: Horwitz moved, and Loeb seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried 5-1. Against: Ciccotelli Abstain: Goodrich
2. Public Comment: No public Comment
3. Recommendation of part-time interim Zoning Administrator for Selectboard Appointment

Allen updated the status of the search for an interim ZA. There have been three applications, none of which met the needs of the position. Two Rivers has informed the PC that they can provide someone to act as interim ZA for 6 hours a week through the end of March. His name is Kyle Katz and he is originally from Norwich

Goodrich and Richards both requested that resumes of the other applicants be made available to the public. Allen responded this is a personnel matter and information on final applicants is shared.

Ciccotelli stated that he endorses the candidate and is pleased with the candidate who's from Norwich and knows about the town.

Goodrich moved and Ciccotelli seconded to recommend to the Selectboard the appointment of Kyle Katz to the position of interim ZA. Motion carried 7-0

4. Full-time Planning Director and Zoning Administrator search

Allen reported we have no candidates for the Planning Director position as yet.

Aquila has created a list of questions to help an interviewer determine if the candidate will be a good fit based on the job description.

Goodrich suggested changes to the job description via email see Attachment A.

5. Announcements and Updates AHSC update:

Lubell stated that the AHSC continues to explore the possibility of building on a site north of the transfer station and needs to conduct an environmental assessment to determine if the area in question was previously part of the transfer station. There are programs through the state of VT to help with brownfield assessment and provide funds.

Goodrich supports using the State's Brownfields Reuse and Environmental Liability Limitation Program (BRELLA) program and said there will be no cost to the town if this path is successful. He estimates the total cost could be anywhere for \$20k to \$400K, more likely on the lower end.

Goodrich motioned and Loeb seconded to endorse the AHSC to pursue funds to explore environmental concerns about the site north of the Transfer Station.

Motion Carried 6-1 Against – Ciccotelli

Goodrich left the meeting.

6. Approve Minutes: Horwitz moved, and Loeb seconded to approve the 1/10/23 minutes. Motion carried 6-0.

7. Other Business: None

8. Future Meeting Schedule, and Agenda

2/14/23 Cancelled

Next meeting 3/14/23

9. Public Comment: No public Comment

10. Motion to adjourn Horwitz, Loeb second to adjourn. Motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Vincent Crow

ATTACHMENT A

Input submitted by Jeff Goodrich 2/6/22

Job Title: Zoning Administrator (ZA)

Department: Planning and Zoning

1. JOB SUMMARY
 - 1.1 Understanding and interpreting Town ordinances and regulations.
 - 1.2 Assists the Development Review Board (DRB) with understanding and reviewing land use applications.
 - 1.3 Assists applicants with understanding Town ordinances and regulations and land use application requirements.
 - 1.4 Assists the Planning Commission with its legislative responsibilities.
2. MAJOR DUTIES
 - 2.1 The ZA's primary function includes understanding and interpreting Town ordinances and regulations to process administrative applications and to assist the DRB with understanding and reviewing land use applications including working with applicants, offering staff review comments, assisting the DRB during project review, assisting with the public notice and administrative requirements of land use applications, assisting the DRB with public and deliberative review sessions including preparation of meeting minutes with testimony and findings following deliberative sessions, development of notices of decision, and memorializing permit applications once approved or denied.
 - 2.2 ZA functions include enforcement responsibilities pursuant to Town ordinances and regulations.
 - 2.3 ZA functions will include professional and courteous engagement of the public and volunteer board members at all times.
 - 2.4 As time allows, the ZA will also assist the Planning Commission (PC) with its legislative responsibilities including municipal plan updates, zoning and subdivision regulation revisions, and assistance with coordinating collaborative efforts the PC may pursue such as Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) input, pursuit of grant funding, and engagement of consultants.
 - 2.5 As time allows, the ZA will perform other duties assigned by the Town Manager.
3. KNOWLEDGE **DESIRED FOR** THE POSITION
 - 3.1 Knowledge of and experience with the law related to land use permits, ordinances, regulations, and the responsibilities and roles of lay-boards.
 - 3.2 Knowledge of and experience with interpreting land use regulations, reviewing land use applications, assisting with land use application review, and addressing both administrative and enforcement land use matters.
 - 3.3 Knowledge of and experience with Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and Regional Development Corporations (RDCs).
 - 3.4 Knowledge of and experience with grant writing and administration.
 - 3.5 Knowledge of and experience with digital engagement including document publication and in-person and remote meeting assistance. ArcGIS and GIS skills are also desirable

with the understanding that TRORC and VCGI provide significant resources in this regard.

3.6 The ability to courteously communicate at all times and provide accurate written summaries and documents.

4. SUPERVISORY CONTROLS

4.1 The ZA's primary function is to assist with land use applications as required by the law and the DRB including enforcement.

4.2 The ZA will support the PC with its lawful responsibilities as time allows.

4.3 The ZA will report to the Town Manager and perform additional duties that may be assigned by the Town Manager as time allows.

5. GUIDELINES

5.1 The ZA's conduct shall comport with the legislative requirements of the position and support the legislative requirements of lay boards.

5.2 Town policies, ordinances, and regulations shall direct the ZA's actions.

5.3 The ZA shall support Town Manager requirements for staff participation in the administration of the day-to-day operations of the Town.

6. COMPLEXITY/SCOPE OF WORK

6.1 The ZA must understand current Town ordinances, regulations, and policies to inform all aspects of engaging the public, land use applications, lay board requirements, and enforcement needs including coordination with the Town Manager when legal assistance may be required.

6.2 The ZA's primary responsibility includes addressing land use applications that require guidance to applicants and detailed communication with DRB members who are serving in a volunteer role to understand, review, and vote on materials submitted for each application. This is a complex requirement that requires seeking input and guidance from others (such as regulators; architects; engineers; system analysts for traffic, light, and noise; environmental scientists; real estate professionals; economic specialists; etc.) to help the DRB understand the details associated with each application in the context of existing ordinances and regulations.

6.3 As time allows, the ZA will assist the PC with its responsibilities to update the municipal plan, ordinances, regulations, and policies.

6.4 As time allows, the ZA will assist the Town Manager with other duties needed to support the day-to-day functions of the Town.

7. CONTACTS

7.1 The ZA will report to the Town Manager for employment responsibilities.

7.2 The ZA will coordinate with the DRB for all non-administrative land use applications.

7.3 The ZA will assist and inform all land use applicants.

7.4 The ZA will coordinate with the PC to assist the PC with the execution of its legislative responsibilities.

7.5 The ZA will engage members of the public with courtesy.

7.6 The ZA will transparently engage others involved in land use including, but not limited to, legislative and regulatory interests outside the Town, RPCs, RDCs, public and private regional organizations involved in land use, other land use professionals, adjacent municipalities, and other parties affecting land use in the Town.

- 7.7 The ZA will need to work with other staff members for planning, budgeting, and permitting needs (such as the Public Works Department for driveway permitting, all departments for long-term capital improvement planning, and all departments for Town Plan and other regulatory implications).
- 8 PHYSICAL DEMANDS/WORK ENVIRONMENT
 - 8.1 The ZA must use the Town's digital system to perform daily duties and work with the Town Manager to upgrade existing systems.
 - 8.2 The ZA must be available for public outreach for land use concerns and applications by means of office hours in Tracy Hall, notifications of availability, and timely responses for individual interactions.
 - 8.3 The ZA will need to conduct site visits, interact with people outside the Town, and maintain technical knowledge, which will require skills and abilities in myriad temperature and weather conditions for travel and participation.
- 9. SUPERVISORY AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY
 - 9.1 This position has supervisory responsibility for a Planning Assistant.
 - 9.2 This position is responsible to the Town Manager for employment.
 - 9.3 This position is subject to the law and Town policies.
- 10. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS
 - 10.1 Licensure, degrees, and/or past job positions related to land use applications, municipal project review, and documentation related to land use permits.
 - 10.2 Verbal and written communication skills in person and digitally.
 - 10.3 Town employment requirements such as a driver's license, background check, etc.