

Town of Norwich | Planning Commission Agenda | September 13, 2022 | 6:30pm |

Zoom Access: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89339717735> | Meeting ID: 893 3971 7735

Phone: 888 475 4499 877 853 5257 US Toll-free

Agenda Item	Action	Packet Materials	Time
1. Approve Agenda	Chair will ask Commission to change/reorder agenda items		6:30-6:35
2. Public Comment	Public may speak to topic not on agenda		6:35-6:40
3. Introduce new Planning and Zoning Coordinator			6:40-6:55
4. Land Use Regulations	Discuss objectives	Summary of Commissioner objectives NHPC letter re Design Review for Historic District	6:55-7:25
5. Wastewater Study	Discuss status		7:25-7:35
6. Draft Response to SB	Approve draft response	Draft Response to 3 SB Questions	7:35-7:50
7. Announcements, Reports, Directors Update, AHSC Update, and Correspondence	Comments and questions	Letters to SB on sidewalk master plan and planning grant application. Affordable Housing minutes	7:50-8:00
8. Approve Minutes	Approve minutes. Motion req.	Minutes June 14, 2022 Minutes July 12, 2022	8:00-8:05
9. Other Business	Raise any other topics		8:05-8:10
10. Future Meeting Schedule and Agendas	Review schedule and provide input on upcoming agenda	PC Workplan Update	8:10-8:15
11. Public Comment			8:15-8:20
12. Adjourn	Motion required.		

Future Meetings: 10/11/2022
11/08/2022

Encl:
Summary Commissioner Objectives for LURs
Draft Response to 3 SB Questions
Letters to SB on sidewalk master plan and planning grant application
Draft PC Minutes, June 14, 2022, July 12, 2022
PC Workplan

Summary of Commissioners Stated Objectives for New LURs on July 12, 2022

Commissioner	Objectives	Link to 2020 Town Plan	Link to Statute
Ciccotelli	i) Not staff drafted (created by PCers) ii) Support Ag & Forestry iii) Prevent suburbanization iv) Reduced taxes v) Anti-Sprawl/growth controls	i) N/A ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) N/A v) ✓	i) N/A ii) ✓ iii) ☒ iv) N/A v) ✓
Allen	i) More diverse housing stock ii) Not just development on Current Use eligible lots (>25ac) iii) Preserve Forest Blocks iv) R&D Facilities and appropriate Econ. Development so commercial taxes can offset residential taxes v) Facilitating childcare centers	i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) ☒ v) ✓	i) ✓ ii) ☒ iii) ✓ iv) ☒ v) vague
Aquila	i) Clear document ii) Consistent with 2020 Town Plan iii) Consistent with statute	i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) Assumed	i) N/A ii) Required iii) Required
Loeb	As above		
Horwitz	As Above		

Norwich Historic Preservation Commission

September 6, 2022

Jaci Allen, Chair
Planning Commission
Town of Norwich
PO Box 376
Norwich, Vermont 05055

Cc: Selectboard, Development Review Board, Rod Francis

Dear Jaci,

The work of the Planning Commission holds the future of Norwich, its viability, assets, and appearance and embraces some of the goals of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC): a viable local economy and quality of life, cultural tourism, and education—for us more specifically through the preservation of the built landscape and archeological resources. In so doing, the HPC believes that stagnation is unproductive and unrealistic and that ‘change is good’ with appropriate checks and balances to channel personal objectives in a parallel plane with the common good.

Lately, the HPC has watched the perplexing erosion in the beauty and historical significance of Norwich’s built environment. While the HPC focuses on its root causes through public programming and state-funded grant projects like the recent historic barns survey, Norwich is nevertheless losing the character and cultural value that makes this great place different and desirable. The HPC is not fully meeting its mandate to preserve and to promote Norwich’s historic character and authenticity. We want to contribute more fully to your work for all our Norwich neighbors.

Two current regulations compromise our advocacy for the historic structures that add so much to our quality of life in Norwich. The first is the exemption of owners of one and two-family dwellings from the Development Review process (or any review). Currently, any homeowner of a property on the National Register of Historic Places can raze their home or change its architectural integrity without review. The second pertains to the HPC’s Ordinance, which prohibits our participation in the review of a project before the Development Review Board. We could offer valuable guidance to projects before the DRB based on the professional experience and knowledge of historic architecture and landscapes represented on the HPC. Our proposal does not entail more ‘rules and regs.’ We only propose a slot in the Building Permit process to make non-binding, bulleted recommendations to private householders about the design features and conditions that support the value of their real estate and the overall character of Norwich.

As you know, the HPC ordinance allows us to advise and to assist the Selectboard and Planning Commission on matters pertaining to historic preservation. As you revise the Zoning Regulations, please consider discussing with us opportunities to allow relevant contributions by the HPC to defining the future appearance and cultural significance of our town. We very much hope you will invite us to come to a Planning Commission meeting to discuss this proposal.

With thanks,



Nancy Osgood, *Chair*
Norwich Historic Preservation Commission

Planning Commission Response to Selectboard Questions

Draft 8-24-22

1. What is the committee's charge as you all understand it?

As summarized on the Town website, Planning Commission responsibilities are described in [Vermont Statute \(VSA 24\)](#) and include:

- Preparing a town plan
- Preparing zoning and subdivision regulations based on the town plan
- Conducting studies on other planning issues
- Making recommendations to the Selectboard

2. What are the committee's current initiatives (provide timelines if applicable)?

Planning Commission initiatives are driven by the objectives, policies, and action items in the [2020-28 Town Plan](#) which are detailed throughout the plan and summarized on pages 56-60. Timelines have been affected by COVID and Rod's transition to Town Manager.

- We're in the midst of re-writing the 2009 Land Use Regulations. This work and the estimated timeline assume ongoing full-time support from an experienced planner not currently in place. Both the Administrative and General Sections are now in draft form. The revised zoning and subdivision regulations will incorporate a whole series of recommendations from the Town Plan, including:
 - Maintaining the rural character of Norwich by preserving working lands and forests.
 - Recognizing the important ecosystem service performed by forests.
 - Implementing policies related to flood hazards, riparian areas, and stormwater management; and
 - Implementing recommendations made in the Housing chapter.The next sections to be addressed in detail are two technical sections 1) site plan review and 2) subdivision standards. Expected timeline for a completed draft is a minimum of 12 months.
- A final report from the Density Study is scheduled for review. This is an important input for the Land Use Regulation updates (particularly subdivision standards.) This work is grant funded and requires active support from town planner. Expected completion October 2022.
- A consultant has been engaged for the Wastewater Study. This is also an important input for Land Use Regulations. This work is grant funded and requires active support from town planner. Expected completion Spring 2023.
- We've developed and proposed a process for creating a Sidewalk, Trails, and Bike Paths Master Plan, and await direction from the SB to move forward. This work is grant funded and requires active support from town planner. Expected completion Fall 2023.
- We provide support for Affordable Housing Sub-committee initiatives, as needed, and await a decision from the SB on help from TRORC to apply for a grant to study Town-owned parcels. Expected completion Fall 2023.

3. What are the committee's goals and/or principal activities for the next three years?

- Complete the rewrite and adoption of new Land Use Regulations
- Facilitate the completion of a Sidewalk, Trails, and Bike Paths Master Plan
- Continue to support Affordable Housing Sub-committee initiatives, as needed
- Facilitate completion of [2020-2028 Town Plan](#) action items by other Town committees, as needed.

To: Norwich Selectboard

From: Norwich Planning Commission

Date: July 19, 2022

Re: Selectboard Approval to Apply for Vermont Community Development Program Planning Grant for Northern Portion of the Norwich Transfer Station Parcel

At the last Planning Commission meeting on June 13th, we approved the attached recommendation from the Affordable Housing Sub-committee that the Town of Norwich apply for a Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) Planning Grant for site planning work associated with the possible development of affordable housing on the northern portion of the transfer station parcel. **We request your approval as well.** The subcommittee recommends that we ask TRORC to assist the Town with preparing a grant application and administering the grant on behalf of the Town. This means no extra work for Town staff and the potential for receiving grant money to evaluate a site that's been identified by the Affordable Housing Sub-committee that has promise for developing several units of affordable housing.

In brief, the VCDP awards planning grants of up to \$60,000 each using the state's allocation of federal Community Development Block Grants. Here's how it would work:

- The Affordable Housing Sub-committee proposes using the funds to hire a consultant to do the basic site preparation work necessary to confirm whether the northern portion of the transfer station parcel is a viable site on which to develop affordable housing, to develop a basic site plan, and to develop a plan for financing the development. It's expected an assessment of the site's wastewater capacity and an examination of subsurface water quality would be included.
- TRORC would prepare the application and administer the planning grant, reducing the burden on Town staff. They would charge a fee to be negotiated that could be paid for out of the grant; Kevin Geiger indicated on a similar planning grant, they charged a fee of \$10,500.
- A 10% match is required, which means the Town would need to pay \$6,000 to receive a \$60,000 grant (for a total amount of \$66,000 in project resources). Also, when CDBG funds are used for housing, the housing must serve households with incomes at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI). This amount varies by household size. For example, for Federal Fiscal Year 2022, 80% of AMI in Norwich (based on the Windsor County median family income) is \$70,500 for a family of four and \$63,4500 for a family of three. While it's not clear if this income limit formally applies to planning grant applications (as opposed to applications for assistance building the housing), as a practical matter, **it will be important in submitting the application to document the town's intention to serve households that meet these income guidelines.** Please notes that these limits are consistent with the policies the town has already adopted for use of the \$40,000 Affordable Housing Fund and a common threshold that would be used by federal and state funding sources for construction of affordable housing.

As you know, no affordable housing has been developed in Norwich since 1992, and we are now in the middle of a statewide and nationwide crisis. As this request is time sensitive to qualify for the available grant, your prompt attention is appreciated.

Memo

To: Norwich Planning Commission

From: Jeffrey Lubell, Chair, Norwich Affordable Housing Subcommittee

Date: July 3, 2022

Re: Vermont Community Development Program Planning Grant for Northern Portion of the Norwich Transfer Station Parcel

At the last Affordable Housing Subcommittee meeting on June 13, 2022 the Subcommittee formally recommended that the Town of Norwich apply for a Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) Planning Grant for site planning work associated with the possible development of affordable housing on the northern portion of the transfer station parcel. The subcommittee recommended that we ask TRORC to assist the Town with preparing the grant application and administering the grant on behalf of the Town and empowered me to send a memo to the Planning Commission sharing our recommendation.

The Subcommittee would very much appreciate the Planning Commission taking such actions as are necessary to secure the Town's agreement to proceed with this application, which we would like to submit in time to meet a February 7, 2023 application deadline. A simple pre-application form is due on December 18, 2022 and a public hearing notice must be issued no later than Jan. 18, 2023 for a required public hearing before the application is submitted.

While there is an application round before then due in September 2022, we think the Feb. 2023 deadline is more realistic.

In brief, the VCDP awards planning grants of up to \$60,000 each using the state's allocation of federal Community Development Block Grants. We would propose using the funds to hire a consultant to do the basic site preparation work necessary to confirm that the northern portion of the transfer station parcel is a viable site on which to develop affordable housing, to develop a basic site plan, and to develop a plan for financing the development. Among other things, I expect this would include an assessment of the site's wastewater capacity and an examination of subsurface water quality. TRORC would prepare the application and administer the planning grant, reducing the burden on Town staff. They would charge a fee to be negotiated that could be paid for out of the grant; Kevin Geiger indicated that on a similar planning grant, they had charged a fee of \$10,500.

A 10% match is required, which means the Town would need to pay \$6,000 to receive a \$60,000 grant (for a total amount of \$66,000 in project resources). Also, when CDBG funds are used for housing, the housing must serve households with incomes at or below 80 percent of

the area median income (AMI). This amount varies by household size. For example, for Federal Fiscal Year 2022, 80% of AMI in Norwich (based on the Windsor County median family income) is \$70,500 for a family of four and \$63,450 for a family of three. While it's not clear if this income limit formally applies to planning grant applications (as opposed to applications for assistance building the housing), as a practical matter, it will be important in submitting the application to document the town's intention to serve households that meet these income guidelines.

Prior to voting to recommend that Norwich move forward with a grant application, the Subcommittee had an opportunity to talk with Kevin Geiger to learn more about the application process and the VCDP Planning Grants. Among other things, he noted that it can sometimes take several rounds of applications for a promising grant application to be funded, given competition for limited funds. This is a good reason to move forward with an application in February 2023, rather than waiting to submit for the first time in April 2023. If we are unsuccessful in our application in February 2023, we could resubmit in April, enhancing our chances of getting funded in 2023.

Please let me know if you have any questions or wish to discuss.

Thank you for considering our request and your assistance in moving this forward for Town approval.

To: Norwich Selectboard

From: Norwich Planning Commission

Date: July 19, 2022

Subject: Scoping Document for Sidewalk, Trails, Bike Paths Master Plan

We're writing to request an opportunity to speak with the Selectboard about a planning project we've drafted and approved to address Town Plan Action Item #6-3.b stated below:

“Develop a master plan for future trails, paths, sidewalks, and bikeways. Use the master plan as a basis for pursuing grants and other funding for design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of planned improvements.”

The project would involve appointing a cross-functional committee that has responsibility for developing the master plan on Norwich sidewalks, trails, and bike paths and launching implementation. The Planning Commission has drafted and approved the attached scoping document to guide the work of this new committee.

Due to the cross-functional mission of this effort that includes an array of Town committees, we ask the Selectboard to take the lead on this initiative by choosing members and monitoring execution. The recent Childcare Committee is a good model for this effort with one addition. The Sidewalk, Trails, Bike Paths Master Plan Committee task will be complete after a work plan has been delineated with assigned actions and the implementation process has been launched.

Thanks for your time and consideration. We look forward to discussing with you at your earliest convenience.

Scoping Document for Sidewalk, Trails, Bike Paths Master Plan

Approved by the Planning Commission 7/12/22

Purpose of the Committee: Complete Town Plan Action Item # 6-3.b

Develop a master plan for future trails, paths, sidewalks, and bikeways. Use the master plan as a basis for pursuing grants and other funding for design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of planned improvements.

Starts: Committee formed and chair elected

Ends: Acceptance of the Master Plan by the Selectboard and implementation process launched

Activities include:

- Review and summary of past Town work in these areas, history of sidewalk development documented, inventory of existing infrastructure, research on approaches of other towns, new study from consultants, public dialogue, drafting a master plan, gaining approval from participating committees and the Selectboard

Proposed Committee representatives:

- Planning Commission member
- Selectboard member
- Conservation Commission member
- Energy Committee member
- Historic Preservation Commission member
- Interested members of the public
- Fire District representative
- Planning Director

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday June 14, 2022, 6:30pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Zoom Meeting:

<p>https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89339717735 Meeting ID: 893 3971 7735</p>
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Members Present: Jaci Allen, Brian Loeb, Ernie Ciccotelli, Melissa Horwitz, Jeff Goodrich, Vince Crow, Marc Aquila
Public Present: Linda Cook, Linda Gray
Staff: Rod Francis

Meeting Opened: 6:36pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Goodrich moved and Loeb seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Goodrich stated that the agenda was too big to address but that the commission must be guided by Vermont Statutes Annotated (VSA) and that Rod Francis has a conflict of interest because of his current role as an employee of the Town of Norwich (Town Manager) as distinct from being an employee of the Town of Norwich (Planning Director). Motion carried 4-2- 1. For: Allen, Loeb, Horwitz, Aquila. Against: Ciccotelli, Goodrich. Abstain: Crow.

2. Public Comment: Linda Gray of the Energy Committee commented that she had information on how to draft zoning regulations responsive to energy targets. Goodrich asked that the information be circulated to the whole commission.

3. General Section of Land Use Regulations

Goodrich suggested that a subcommittee be formed to review the contents of staff provided draft LUR language.

Horwitz responded that the Open Meeting Law (OML) requirements made this idea impractical.

Goodrich stated that he wanted to spend more time looking at all the potential uses allowed for in Norwich.

Chair Allen asked commissioners what their expectations were for the July meeting. Commissioners suggested a higher-level discussion of specific things they wanted to see in the new regulations and a conceptual overview of zoning districts

4. Wastewater Feasibility Study Steering Committee nomination

Goodrich moved and Loeb seconded a motion to recommend to the Selectboard the nomination of Marc Aquila as a member of the wastewater feasibility study steering committee. Motion carried 6-1. For: Allen, Loeb, Horwitz, Ciccotelli, Crow, Aquila. Against: Goodrich.

5. Scoping Document for Sidewalks, Trails, Bike Paths Master Plan

Commissioners discussed potential changes to the document including i) adding a representative from the Fire District and ii) researching the history of Norwich sidewalks. Commissioners expressed a preference for a standing committee to be formed (similar to the Affordable Housing Subcommittee).

6. Announcements, Reports, Updates, and Correspondence

Loeb updated the meeting after the successful public outreach process. The subcommittee is eager to pursue analysis of the Fire District lands on Beaver Meadow RD and is investigating the suitability of a Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) to fund the analysis of the DPW parcel on New Boston RD. Francis reported that he hoped to advertise the Planner position soon.

7. Approve Minutes of April 12, 2022, and May 10, 2022

Loeb moved and Ciccotelli seconded a motion to approve the April 12, 2022, minutes. Motion carried 5-0-1. For Allen, Loeb, Ciccotelli, Crow, Aquila. Against: Goodrich, Abstain: Horwitz.

Aquila moved and Ciccotelli seconded a motion to approve the May 10, 2022, minutes. Motion carried 6-0. For: Allen, Loeb, Horwitz, Ciccotelli, Crow, Aquila.

8. Other Business: none

9. Future Meeting Schedule

June – Scoping Document for Paths and trails Committee

10. Comments from the Public: none

11. Meeting adjourned: 8:27pm

Future Meetings:

Tuesday, July 12, Regular Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Rod Francis

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

DRAFT MINUTES

Zoom Meeting:

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

Meeting ID: 893 3971 7735

Members Present: Jaci Allen, Brian Loeb, Ernie Ciccotelli, Melissa Horwitz, Vince Crow, Marc Aquila
Public Present: Linda Cook
Staff: Rod Francis

Meeting Opened: 6:32pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Ciccotelli moved and Horwitz seconded a motion to approve the agenda.

2. Public Comment: none

3. General Section of Land Use Regulations

Francis presented a Google Earth on screen showing Norwich zoning districts. He explained the five different zoning districts and explained that the rural residential district accounted for 97 percent of the land area and included a large variety of development uses, form, and intensity of development from edge of village with higher density development to parcels of several hundred acres. Francis then presented a use table and discussed omissions, internal contradictions, missing or contradictory definitions and areas no longer in compliance with state statute.

Ciccotelli told the meeting that he was opposed to the idea of the commission responding to a draft document prepared by staff. He wants the document to support agriculture and forestry, and to ensure that Norwich does not become more suburban. At the same time, he wants to see taxes reduced. Ciccotelli stated that contrary to what many people think increased population and development do not reduce taxes per household but rather the reverse, so anti-sprawl and growth controls are important measures in land use regulation.

Allen said she was looking for a more diverse housing stock, not just development tied to current use eligible lots (25 acres and over), preserving forest blocks, research and development facilities (R&D) and appropriate economic development so that commercial property taxes could offset residential tax rates, and facilitating the supply of childcare centers.

Aquila, Loeb and Horwitz are looking forward to a clear document that is consistent with both the 2020 town plan and Vermont statute.

4. Wastewater Feasibility Study Steering Committee update

Francis informed the group that the consultant team now had the list of steering committee appointees and he expected to meet with them soon to initiate work.

5. Scoping Document for Sidewalks, Trails, Bike Paths Master Plan

Commissioners reviewed the document and were in broad agreement that the scoping document was ready for transmittal to the Selectboard.

Allen moved and Loeb seconded a motion that the planning commission approve the scoping document and transmit it to the selectboard for consideration. Motion carried 5-1. For: Allen, Loeb, Horwitz, Crow, Aquila. Against Ciccotelli.

6. Announcements, Reports, Updates, and Correspondence

Loeb referenced the memo from Jeff Lubbell in the packet and informed the meeting that the affordable housing subcommittee (AHSC) is anxious to hear from the selectboard regarding the force of deed language and related agreements between the town and the Fire District. The AHSC still wants to conduct feasibility studies on the land while this matter is being resolved. Francis cautioned that it wasn't yet clear if the Fire District and the Land

Management Council (LMC) were in agreement with the concept of residential development, that no proposed lot boundaries had been identified to facilitate any study within a very large area and that the possibility remained that any change to the language of the deeds or related agreements may need to be ratified by annual town meeting. Work on answering these questions was ongoing.

Commissioners then turned their attention to the town highway garage site. Francis used a Google Earth map and imagery to facilitate discussion of the property. Loeb indicated that the AHSC was interested in pursuing a Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) with the assistance of Two Rivers Regional Commission (TRORC) to conduct a feasibility study for locating housing at the top of the steep slope to the north of the highway garage, where the towns telecommunication tower is located.

Ciccotelli suggested that the planning commission do a housing study. Allen noted that the housing chapter of the 2020 town plan and housing strategy

Loeb moved and Crow seconded a motion that the planning commission transmit the memo from Jeff Lubell to the selectboard for consideration. Motion carried 5-1. For: Allen, Loeb, Horwitz, Crow, Aquila. Against Ciccotelli.

Francis reported that he had advertised the Planner position.

7. Approve Minutes of June 14, 2022

Deferred to next meeting.

8. Other Business: none

9. Future Meeting Schedule

Next meeting is September

10. Comments from the Public: none

11. Meeting adjourned: 8:37pm

Future Meetings:

Tuesday, September 13, Regular Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Rod Francis

PC Workplan 2022

Task	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1 2021 MPG (density study) draft RFQ release RFQ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> award contract intro meeting with PC milestone report							
2 WW Study draft RFQ release RFQ award contract intro meeting outreach							
3 LUR re-write Administration Overview DRB input Review Draft							
4 Trails and Paths Master Plan Coordinate with Con Comm. Plan Review & Prioritization Draft workplan for 2022							