

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION  
Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, May 11, 2017, Tracy Hall**

Regular Meeting

**Members Present:** Allen, Brink, Horwitz, Lubell, Brien, Thoms, Goodrich

**Members Absent:**       **Clerk:** Phil Dechert

**Others:** Stuart Richards, Calli Guion, Colin Calloway, Marcia Calloway, Cheryl Sittle, Stuart Richards, Frank Manasek, Linda Cook

Jeff Goodrich, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

1.     **Approve Agenda** – Approved
2.     **Election of Officers:**  
The following officers were elected:
  - a. Chair – Jeff Goodrich
  - b. Vice-Chair – Susan Brink
  - c. Clerk – Phil Dechert
3.     **Meeting Topics and Goals**
  - a. Town Plan Update – Approve additional sections or changes. Move towards a final vote to warn hearing.
  - b. Zoning Revisions - Review draft changes to Article III
4.     **Comments from the Public**
  - a. Stuart Richards – Richards requested copy of current Town Plan draft in Word. Dechert said the only revised versions in Word were limited to only the sections with revisions and they were on the Norwich Planning web page. Richards intended to submit additional mark ups.
  - b. Dechert was requested to send Planning Commission members copies of Town Plan comments submitted by public to Selectboard included in the packet for the May 10 meeting.
5.     **Minutes** – 4-27-17 – Approved with minor change to first sentence. Future minutes will include a list of future action items at the end.
6.     **Announcements, Reports, Updates & Correspondence**
  - a. Correspondence
    - i. An email from Calli Guion, dated 3-6-17, was received and will be re-visited with zoning revisions
  - b. Updates
    - i. A proposed Planning Commission letter to the Public Service Board to support the Certificate of Public Good (CPG) process for a proposed Solar Site at 673 Union Village Road was reviewed. This is a resubmission of a similar application the Planning Commission had reviewed and approved in November 2015. Brien moved (second by Thoms) to authorize the Chair to sign the letter of support. The motion passed 7-0.

- ii. Jeff Lubell presented a draft “Spring Update Letter” from the Norwich Planning Commission” he had read at the previous evening’s Selectboard meeting. The letter will be distributed by town email list, list serve and town web site. Allen will coordinate distribution. A copy will be attached to these minutes.

**7. Town Plan Updates –**

- a. Dechert reviewed the status of the town plan updates:
  - i. Energy, Land Use, and Facilities mark-up drafts approved at the last meeting have been reformatted into the new town plan draft (May 8<sup>th</sup>) distributed before the meeting.
  - ii. The approved Resiliency and Transportation drafts have not been reformatted yet.
  - iii. The Village Designation section will be ready for the next meeting.
- b. Lubell submitted a few changes to the Land Use section adding additional emphasis to the intention to consider but not make any Zoning District changes in the Route 5 South/River Road areas under this town plan. After discussion, Lubell moved to accept these changes and Brink seconded the motion, The motion was approved 7-0.

**8. Zoning Update**

- a. Review Draft updates for Article III – Postponed to May 25.

**9. Future Meeting Schedule & Agenda**

- a. May 25 – Review formatted town plan updates and vote to schedule hearing if ready. Review any distributed zoning drafts. Review Article III Zoning Draft.

**Adjournment:** 8:25 PM

Phil Dechert, Clerk

*APPROVED 5/26/17*

**Future Meetings:**

Thursday, May 25, 2017 – Regular Meeting  
Thursday, June 8, 2017 – Regular Meeting  
Thursday, June 22, 2017 – No Meeting

Planning Commission Agendas & Minutes available at: <http://norwich.vt.us/planning-commission/>

**May 11, 2017**

## **Spring Update from the Norwich Planning Commission**

### **Follow-up from February public meeting:**

Thanks to all who participated in our February public meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to gather feedback on ideas for increasing the availability of affordable housing in Norwich by rezoning the Route 5 South/River Road areas. The comments were extremely helpful.

Based on this input, we understand more discussion and refinement of these ideas is needed. Accordingly, we've decided to take no formal steps at this time to advance any Route 5 South/River Road zoning proposal. Instead, we plan to conduct a series of small group discussions in the coming months to get further input on how best to respond to public feedback and address the affordable housing need in Norwich.

We'll send out more information on these small group sessions after we've addressed our current priority, which is reinstatement of the town plan.

### **Reinstatement of the Town Plan**

The Norwich town plan was created from a multi-year process that culminated in 2011, and we feel it has served our town well. The plan has lapsed, and reinstatement is necessary for Norwich to apply for government grants and obtain tax credits associated with the village designation for the town center on Main Street.

We're proposing the town reinstate the current plan with only minimal updates necessary to respond to changes in state law and concerns raised by the regional planning commission. Broadly, these changes focus on:

- Identifying current and future sources and use of energy in the town
- Planning, financing and maintaining municipal facilities
- Increasing resiliency to floods and fluvial erosion
- Support for the "Village Center" designation for the historic village

We want to make clear that reinstatement of the town plan will NOT authorize a new zoning district for the Route 5 South/River Road areas. Instead, the reinstated plan will include language that if such a district were to be proposed in the future, it would require a formal amendment to the town plan. This amendment would need to be approved by the Select Board.

In terms of next steps, a final draft of the reinstated town plan is expected to be complete by the end of this month. Upon approval by the Planning Commission, there will be a public hearing with a 30-day warning period. The document will then move to the Select Board for its consideration.

The Planning Commission welcomes questions at its meetings or by letter.