

Minutes of the First Town Plan Public Hearing (1A & 1B)
Saturday, January 20, 2018 at 3:00 pm
Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 7:00pm

First Town Plan Public Hearing 1A

Saturday, January 20, 2018 at 3:00 pm

Members present: Mary Layton, Chair; Linda Cook; Stephen Flanders; John Langhus; John Pepper; Herb Durfee, Town Manager.

There were about 65 people in the audience.

Also participating: John Carroll (moderator and timer), Jeff Lubell (PC), Pam Smith, Tracey Kawecki, Sue Pitiger, Calli Guion, Ernie Ciccotelli, Charlotte Metcalf, Dean Seibert, Claudette Brochu, Anna Adachi-Mejia, Tracey Hayes, Marcia Calloway, Frank Manasek, Mike Novick, Liz Adams, Anne McGowan, Sarah Reeves, Colin Calloway, Ann Seibert, Stuart Richards, John Farrell, Robert Kewer, Anne Foley, John Felde, Chris Moore, Warren Thayer, Kris Clement, Cheryl Lindberg

Layton made a motion to open the meeting at 3:07pm. Flanders second.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

1. Layton reviewed the basic agenda and ground rules of the Public Meeting. Questions would be documented and answered at a later date. The emphasis was to spend as much time listening to public comment and questions as possible in the 120 minute period.
2. Jeff Lubell of the Norwich Planning Commission (PC) presented for approximately 5 minutes with a brief set of slides. Lubell discussed that the historical 5 year between Town Plan updates had been too tight and Norwich had often made major updates every 10 years with minor updates every 5. The last major update was in 2011. The 2017 was considered a minor update.

Lubell emphasized a few points regarding the plan: the 2017 Town Plan does not contemplate mixed use, hamlets, etc. in the Route 5 South or River Road districts due to feedback from public during 2017. The document the PC is proposing is very much an edit of the current plan which is responsible for the town we all currently experience.

3. John Langhus spoke for approximately 3 minutes emphasizing that this hearing represents the official hand off of the Town Plan to the Selectboard. He reviewed that there are two required Public Hearings. The hearing today and on Tuesday 1/23 comprise parts 1 and 2 of the 1st Official Public Hearing. He reminded the public of the informal nature of the hearing, offering that people could review the action plans of each chapter which were

posted on the walls, etc. Questions by the public were not to be answered during the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY:

1. Pam Smith shared that there was lots of opposition from the public from all corners of Norwich. She pointed out Map #11 as most striking showing what she estimated to be a 100%+ increase in the size of the Village Center. She asked that the Selectboard put the issue of Village Center expansion the Town Warrant for a decision by the voters of the town.
2. Tracey Kawecky, via Pam Smith, based on the public gathering at the NPL on January 19, suggests that the Selectboard reject the proposed Town Plan and send it back to the Planning Commission to start over. She also suggests that more collaboration take place in the next round.
3. Sue Pitiger asked a question about the Housing section and wanted to know if anyone could summarize the key changes in that section between 2011 vs. 2017.
4. Calli Guion talked about Norwich being seen as expensive, snobbish and elitist. Development will only add to taxes, especially given increases necessary to cover utilities, sewage, etc. If "indiscriminate development" is allowed, Norwich will "lose our town". She requested that one year be spent seeking further contributions from the public.
5. Ernie Ciccotelli first clarified the versions of the plans and talked about the words used in the proposed plan specifically related to sustainability and sustainable development. Referenced "Our Common Future" and feels the proposed TP will be misconstrued and lead to conflict and law suits. Suggests the TP must either be pro-growth or sustainable, but cannot be both.
6. Charlotte Metcalf asked questions about the impact of the TRORC regional plan. She discussed the "feasibility" study as well as a PC member's previous suggestion that 150 units or more in the Route 5 South area was the only way to make development financially viable. She shared statistics on tax impact of development, summarizing that "undeveloped land is the fiscal winner".
7. Dean Seibert shared the lens of asking whether the vision of the proposed TP moves the Town forward or does it cause harm. He suggested that parts of it do cause harm and that the Selectboard should weigh those issues carefully. He also shared his disappointment that hamlets had been removed from the TP. He concluded by noting that the most fragile section of our town is the Village Center (anchored by Dan & Whits, etc.).

8. Claudette Brochu pointed out what she feels was an error in that the town is not growing as the TP indicates. She also felt that the PC did not meet statutes because they had not included enough public comment.
9. Anna Adachi- Mejia discussed affordable housing and asked how could we achieve our goals using the stock we already have.
10. Marcia Calloway discussed lack of but requirement of citizen participation throughout the process. She pointed out that she has been waiting for answers to some of her questions on participation for over 5 weeks. She feels that zoning can be changed with the Town Plan and that it wouldn't take much to have open-ended development and change our town forever.
11. Frank Manasek discussed the difference between claims of "hard work" and "outcomes" and shared that he wanted to focus on outcomes and not the hard work put into producing a Town Plan. He requested that the Selectboard remove and replace the entire Planning Commission.
12. Mike Novick listed six substantial changes in the 2017 proposed TP versus the 2011 TP and commented that zoning changes must follow the Town Plan.
13. Liz Adams said that she is not opposed to growth. Housing in Norwich is increasingly hard for families to reach. New students are critical. Young families bring vibrancy to our town, and we may be at risk of "loving Norwich to death".
14. Anne McGowan restated that Jeff Lubell clearly indicated that development has been removed. She said that potential residents who make a good living cannot necessarily afford to live here.
15. Sarah Reeves discussed the need to add affordable housing in a reasonable way, but Route 5 South just is not the right location. Keep Route 5 South a Gateway that is beautiful.
16. Colin Calloway supports affordable housing but believes the TP opens the way for unrestricted development which he does not support.
17. Ann Seibert showed a map that was "floating around" (which was from the TRORC Regional Plan apparently). She did an informal inventory and counts 50 affordable housing units along Route 5 South that would be removed when the land became more valuable after development is permitted.
18. Stuart Richards sees an effort by the PC to suburbanize Norwich and that the TP leaves the door open to unlimited development. He suggests caps on size and time, and feels it would be a mistake to enable mixed use on Route 5.

19. John Farrell talked about “landscape amnesia” – the slow and gradual building of infrastructure such that nobody really notices it. He is pro affordable housing but against “massive” development.
20. Robert Kewer felt the TP is more like a wish list. Affordable housing is getting more expensive to build. Noted that these plans have no teeth to allow people to move forward.
21. Charlotte Metcalf (2) talked about the new TP designating Route 5 South and River Road as the extension of the Village Center. She cited the recent articles in the Rutland Herald and regulations passed related to building at interchanges.
22. Anne Foley commented on the Town Plan.
23. Jeff Lubell (2) reemphasized that the TP does not proposed development on Route 5. Period. It reflects a great deal of feedback received during the past year.
24. Marcia Calloway (2) had questions regarding Map 11. She asked again why not include the public before the PC submitted the TP to the Selectboard and not after.
25. Stuart Richards (2) disagreed with Jeff Lubell’s comments. He pointed out that Map 11 designates a place where intense development will take place and “leaves the door open” for wrong kind of development.
26. Ernie Ciccotelli (2) shared that the TP cannot contain any conflicts or it will lead to hostility, law suits, etc.
27. John Felde talked about how it is very hard for parents to attend Selectboard meetings and Public Hearings like these.
28. Chris Moore wants to understand the link between the TRORC Regional Plan and the Town Plan? Which parts are which?
29. Marcia Calloway (3) made TRORC comments and a comment on Map 11.
30. Warren Thayer made comments on the process and shared his disappointment when the integrity of those serving in elected office is questioned.
31. Robert Kewer (2) expressed concern about the “green desert” that is the area leading to the river on 10A. Shared an idea to expand the Village Center long 10A instead of doing so in another area like Route 5 South.

32. Claudette Brochu (2) questioned whether the stats in the Regional info were up to date... WRJ, Leb, etc.
33. Stuart Richards (3) asked that SB and PC set a clear goal for actual amounts of affordable housing.
34. Kris Clement asked for the definition of an advisory vote. John Langhus responded.
35. John Langhus made closing remarks.
36. Cheryl Lindberg asked what exact zoning had been worked on by the PC that had been mentioned previously.

Linda Cook, John Pepper, Steven Flanders and Mary Layton each made brief concluding remarks.

Linda Cook moved (2nd Flanders) to continue the First Town Plan Public Hearing until 7pm Tuesday, January 23, 2018. All in favor 5-0.

Session 1A concluded at 4:58pm to be continued as Session 1B at 7pm on Tuesday 1/23/18.

First Town Plan Public Hearing 1B

Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 7:00pm

Members present: Mary Layton, Chair; Linda Cook; Stephen Flanders; John Langhus; John Pepper; Herb Durfee, Town Manager.

There were about 70 people in the audience.

Also participating: John Carroll (moderator and timer), Jeff Goodrich (PC), Kathleen Shephard, Paul Manganiello, Bruce McLaughry, Harry Roberts, Anne Foley, Omer Trajman, Daniel Johnson, Chris Ashley, Elizabeth Howard, Tracey Kawecki, Priscilla Vincent, Jenny Levy, Tracey Hayes, Ralph Hybels, Clay Adams, Colin Calloway, Charlotte Metcalf, Frank Manasek, Marcia Calloway, Calli Guion, Stuart Richards, Ernie Ciccotelli, Dean Seibert, Ann Seibert, Roger Arnold, Maggie Pepper, Kris Clement, Chris Moore.

Layton made a motion to continue the meeting at 7:08pm. Flanders second.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

1. Layton reviewed the basic agenda and ground rules of the Public Meeting similar to 1/20.
2. Jeff Goodrich of the Norwich Planning Commission (PC) presented for approximately 5 minutes with a brief set of slides. Goodrich said that the 2017 proposed TP was a re-

adoption of the 2011 TP, with revisions based on public comment. He highlighted the red-line version available on line.

3. John Carroll introduced himself as a glorified timekeeper, but then retracted that saying he was “just” a timekeeper 😊
4. John Langhus spoke for approximately 3 minutes repeating the introduction he had made on 1/20.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Kathleen Shepherd has lived in Norwich for 40 years and supports efforts to increase diversity, add school children and to be fair in decision-making. She supports the idea of the listening sessions to hear from a large swath of people.
2. Paul Manganiello, affordable housing subcommittee, said there was little to show for so many years of work on his and others’ part. Moving here today he said he could not support the home they live in now. He sees nothing objectionable about the proposed TP.
3. Bruce McLaughry shared data related to real estate in Norwich, as well as median income statistics around the region (Leb, Hanover, Hartford, etc.) demonstrating need for affordable housing. Lowest inventory of housing since 2007 – the Upper Valley is short 5,000 housing units. In 2017 7 homes in Norwich sold for less than \$250K, and 10 homes sold for less than 300.
4. Harry Roberts discussed the Grand List and its 1312 single-family dwellings.
5. Anne Foley talked about the trend of affordable housing being purchased and then renovated, expanded, and no longer being affordable. She said the TP is “ok”, but very vague, and the door is open for distasteful, big development which won’t add to Norwich but will take away from Norwich.
6. Paul Manganiello (2) shared that he is tired of the Listserve accusations of individuals servings on boards and committees.
7. Omer Trajaman is broadly supportive of the proposed TP and submitted notes to the TM. Appreciated the updates to energy and focus on sustainable growth.
8. Daniel Johnson, former chair of PC during 2011 TP, discussed the transparency at that time and shared that it was fundamentally flawed to throw it out and start from scratch. “Documents learn over time”, and felt changes are headed in the right direction.
9. Chris Ashley supported the TP in the spring and continues to support it. Encourages an advisory vote and talked about Norwich relying on Upper Valley and not just on itself.

10. Elizabeth Howard shared concerns about keeping Norwich affordable for those already here.
11. Tracey Kawecki reiterated her statement from 1A and worries that the TP includes all of the ingredients that allow an exemption of Act 250. She suggests the SB reject the TP outright.
12. Priscilla Vincent shared thoughts on challenges of water and sewer.
13. Jenny Levy supports plan as redlined – shared a stat that both at Hypertherm and DHMC the average person commutes 24 miles.
14. Tracey Hayes shared two concerns: internet and utilities need to be addressed in the TP, and cannabis must be included especially given recent legalization.
15. Ralph Hybels urged the List Serve contributors to be more positive and noted that developers are not clamoring to do work here in Norwich.
16. Clay Adams encourages the adoption of the TP as redlined. Discussed issue of employees in UV not being able to get work near home.
17. Colin Calloway supports affordable housing but is concerned with intent and content as evidenced by meetings of November 8 and December 13. Suggests removal of Map 11 and restart process.
18. Charlotte Metcalf noted that a “top-down approach” could lead to 150 units to make the 35 acre Dyke property viable for a developer. Reiterated from 1A, and suggested taxpayers need to know affect on taxes if TP is adopted.
19. Frank Manasek talked about a priest and a nun going into a bar before sharing that he might boycott the proposed PC-led listening meeting unless there was a quorum and proper minutes taken.
20. Ralph Hybels suggested that people attend Affordable Housing Committee meetings.
21. Chris Ashley made comments on the Development Review Board.
22. Marcia Calloway discussed concerns about Map 11, cited pages 12-9 and 11-23, lack of public participation in PC meetings leading up to proposed TP, questioned who authorized the feasibility study, and said she has no trust in the current PC.
23. Frank Manasek discussed breakout groups and John Langhus briefly clarified their structure.

24. Charlotte Metcalf worries that the listening sessions will have no public record.
25. Calli Guion pointed out the issues of planning vs. planning & zoning.
26. Stuart Richards made comments opposing the TP.
27. Ernie Ciccotelli discussed community involvement in affordable housing projects (“barn raising”) and experimental \$20,000 homes.
28. Dean Seibert concerned about the lack of balance in the TP... what is the impact of such a development? Suggests the SB require an impact assessment and questioned why Regional Commission has flipped so dramatically on their Route 5 stance. Asks SB to find out why the change?
29. Ann Seibert repeated inventory of affordable housing and suggests that in the long run having commercial development along a river will be considered very bad judgment.
30. Stuart Richards stated that the TP will increase our taxes, reiterated lack of Caps in the town plan, and emphasized that Norwich does not need to bring jobs – this is a bedroom community. No sewage, spend less.
31. Roger Arnold pointed out that the TP says no action is to be taken with respect to zoning or development and supports that. He discussed wealth disparity.
32. Maggie Pepper agreed with Roger Arnold and asked for his number and if he might have coffee with her sometime. Selectboard member John Pepper visibly grimaced and made note of the situation.
33. Colin Calloway restated that his opposition to the TP is not opposition to affordable housing. Asked to explore alternatives.
34. Kris Clement questioned the “rush” to adopt the plan. Emphasized need for more compromise.
35. Ralph Hybels restated that the TP does not govern, its merely a vision.
36. Marcia Calloway commented on the TP
37. Harry Roberts wants to know if the Town Plan is not in effect, what grants do we lose?
38. Chris Moore would like more data in the effort to understand how much affordable housing we have already and to provide a basis for deciding how much more we need to develop.

39. Stuart Richards reiterated that the TP doesn't establish goals, for example what % of our housing should be affordable. Currently there are no limits, open-ended.

40. Ralph Hybels said that an analysis was done and is available to answer Chris Moore's question. He reiterated that Norwich needs "significant" affordable housing.

Linda Cook, John Pepper, Steven Flanders, Mary Layton and John Langhus each made brief concluding remarks.

Steven Flanders moved to adjourn. John Langhus second. All in favor 5-0.

Public Hearing adjourned at 8:58pm.

By Mary Layton, Selectboard Chair

Approved by the Selectboard on February 14, 2018

Mary Layton
Selectboard Chair
Next Selectboard Meeting – February 14, 2018 at 6:30 PM

PLEASE NOTE THAT CATV RECORDED BOTH PUBLIC HEARINGS OF THE NORWICH SELECTBOARD.