

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

Thursday, July 25th, 2019, Tracy Hall-Meeting Room, 7 pm

Regular Meeting:

1. Approve Agenda
2. Meeting Objectives:
 - a. TRORC Update
 - b. Discussion with Conservation Commission on Land Use chapter
 - c. Discuss next steps on calendar and input from Town Plan feedback events
3. Comments from the Public
4. Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) update
5. Discuss comments from Conservation Commission on Land Use chapter
6. Discuss calendar and input from Town Plan feedback events
7. Review and approve Minutes 6-27-19 and 7-2-19
8. Announcements, Reports, Updates & Correspondence
 - a. Correspondence
 - i. Emails from Public re: development Route 5 South
 - b. Announcements
 - c. Updates
 - i. Affordable Housing Sub-committee next steps
 - ii. Postcard Survey
 - d. Reports
9. Other Business
10. Future Meeting Schedule & Agendas
11. Comments from the Public

Future Meetings:

Thursday, Aug 22, 7pm Regular Meeting
Thursday, Sept 26, 7pm Regular Meeting
Thursday, Oct 24, 7pm Regular Meeting

Town of Norwich, Vermont



CHARTERED 1761

Peter Gregory
Executive Director
Two Rivers Ottauquechee
Regional Commission
128 King Farm Rd
Woodstock, VT 05091

July 11, 2019

Dear Peter,

Comments on the DRAFT 2019 TRORC Regional Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft 2019 TRORC Regional Plan. Please accept the comments below as the written submission of the Norwich Selectboard and Planning Commission. Our comments focus on proposed changes contained in Chapter 3 Land Use *Interchange Areas* (see p36), including *Mixed Use Areas* (see p35), *Rural Areas* (see p42), and related maps and definitions. The Selectboard and Planning Commission discussed the Draft 2019 Regional Plan (TRORC Plan) at the Selectboard meetings of June 26 and July 10, 2019, and the Planning Commission meetings of June 27 and July 2, 2019.

Norwich supports the decision to eliminate the Interchange Area designation for Norwich and, in general, considers the draft TRORC Plan a step in the right direction. However, we continue to have a number of questions as they relate to the following elements of the TRORC Plan:

1. How are Rural and Mixed Use areas mapped?
2. What density of housing development does the Rural area allow?
3. Does excluding principal retail in Mixed Use areas impact community design?
4. How is community design best facilitated?
5. Why was the public outreach process so limited?

1. How are Rural and Mixed Use areas mapped?

We understand that in the TRORC Plan under consideration a new Mixed Use area is suggested, running south from Route 10A along Route 5. The Lewiston neighborhood is re-assigned to the Rural area, as is the land on the western side of Route 5 South from approximately King Arthur Flour to just south of Hopson Road. The Foggs lumberyard is included in the Hartford "Town Center".

In the written notice of June 7, 2019 notifying Norwich of the proposal to eliminate the Interchange Area and replace it with two other areas (Rural, Mixed Use) there was no explanation as to how the boundaries of the replacement areas were established. The area boundaries do not follow property boundaries or other readily apparent physical features. The scale and organizational scheme of the future land use map included in the TRORC plan (as printed) does not allow the public to review the suggested changes in detail. More explanation of the factors informing the mapping process undertaken by TRORC is needed for Norwich to fully weigh the implications of the proposed changes.

As you can see from the following questions, the density and type of housing development permitted in Rural areas is of great interest to Norwich. One solution may be to map the entire former interchange area as Mixed Use. Another may be to include the Lewiston neighborhood as part of Village Center (which would be more consistent with local zoning). We recognize that the Future Land Use Area categories included in the TRORC Plan must serve the regional vision and be applicable across the thirty member towns, so any elaboration on the methods used for mapping and the assignment of land use areas would be helpful.

2. What density of housing development does the Rural area allow?

Along with more background information on the method for redrawing the future land use map, Norwich seeks a more detailed definition of Rural to be included in the text of the TRORC Plan. Some of the existing Lewiston neighborhood has a standard suburban cul-de-sac form and typical densities — can this built form and density meet the definition of Rural provided in the TRORC Plan? Meanwhile, lands facing River Road are different in character, having been developed as railroad-side service areas and now including a blend of residential and light industry. Many have observed the potential for more intense multi-story residential development in this area (a logical extension of the built pattern existing immediately across the river in Hanover). For Norwich to contemplate amendments to our zoning regulations facilitating this form of development in the future, we would need assurance that such development would also conform to the regional plan.

To provide an adequate framework and guidance, a more detailed discussion of Rural (including scale/density) is needed. Specifically, how does the existing built form or potential future development conform to the following Goals and Policies for Rural Areas of the TRORC Plan (see p44):

Goal 3: Development is at a scale and type that conforms to historical patterns and does not detract from Regional Growth Areas

Policy 3: New individual multi-unit residential units containing five units or less are appropriate along Class 3 or better roads, but larger ones are not...

As we understand it, new affordable housing projects generally need to be larger than five units to achieve viability. As written, the definition above does not make clear whether the five-unit limit is meant to apply to individual structures or to a parcel, which may have more than one structure. As currently written, we understand the TRORC Plan to limit housing development in Rural areas to five-unit developments. This may undermine Norwich's ability to facilitate affordable housing and to meet the following TRORC Plan Housing Policy (p176)

- 7 Towns should plan so that most new residential development is near employment, transportation lines, and/or service centers.

3. Does excluding principal retail in Mixed Use areas impact community design?

The Mixed Use district contemplates a range of uses similar to the existing Interchange area policies with the addition of multi-family housing and more variety in light industry and comparable uses. Principal Retail as a use will continue to not be permitted. Norwich acknowledges the statutory *encouragement* of land use regulations that reinforce the economic vitality of existing Village Centers and Growth Centers. But we also see potential for mixed use **buildings** (not just subdivisions with a variety of single use structures) combining commercial/office space with residential uses and retail. Compact (footprint under 6,000sqft) mixed use structures are a common smart growth design response. When combined with robust

site plan standards this form of development can provide universal access, open-plan small-scale commercial space with housing that achieves a price point many smaller households can better afford. This scale of development could still utilize on-site waste-water management, an important feature for this area.

Under the current plan and in the TRORC Plan principal retail is not defined with reference to floor area, sales volume or other quantitative measures. We ask that the definition be based on a clear quantitative measure. We also ask that structures under a reasonable limit, such as a footprint of 6,000sqft (which is smaller than typical box stores) be exempted from the principal retail exclusion, where a residential use is included in the same structure. We note that the area currently has development that meets the TRORC definition of 'principal retail'. Impacts requiring mitigation from these existing uses such as access management, traffic volumes, noise and visual impact are well within the design limits of US Route 5 and existing Norwich Land Use Regulations.

4. How is Community Design best facilitated?

We are concerned that the land use areas proposed for Norwich in the TRORC Plan would jeopardize the ability of developers to produce multi-family housing in Norwich. The optimal locations for future housing development in Norwich would be close to the existing civic, service and employment centers in Norwich village, Hanover to the east, and Wilder to the south along the highways that are already served by public transit. Some parts of Norwich that best fit this description are Route 5 South from the Hartford town line north to 10A, on both sides of Route 5, and River Road north from Route 10A to Route 5. The TRORC Plan captures portions of these lands in a mixed use area, but much of it is designated as rural and, as discussed above, these designations (as written) appear to exclude the possibility of multi-family housing with more than five units.

Further, for the kind of mixed use area that the TRORC Plan envisages to succeed, more consideration of community design is needed. We encourage more thought be given to the actual *mix* of uses and designs standards that address any possible conflicts. In our view, rethinking the Mixed Use area from the perspective of community design reinforces the argument for allowing some level of retail use where it is focused on the neighborhood and passing traffic. The TRORC Plan rightly identifies energy and housing availability as two major concerns and devotes a chapter to healthy communities which explicitly draws links between the built environment, land use and public health. It would be regrettable if the broad exclusion of principal retail prevents the emergence of residential neighborhoods with thoughtful community design. Currently, multi-unit housing developments further south on Route 5 in Hartford are car dependent regarding access to retail services or social spaces such as cafes. Norwich encourages TRORC to visualize small mixed-use neighborhoods where residents could walk or bike to retail establishments and employment opportunities, consistent with your policies contained in *Chapter 2: Healthy Communities*. For this to be possible a more nuanced treatment of principal retail is needed.

5. Why was the public outreach process so limited?

Norwich appreciates that TRORC is comprised of thirty member communities and the significant cost and complexity of undertaking the necessary public outreach. We are heartened by the effort to draft this plan mindful of the impact of climate change and the need to plan for a shift away from fossil fuel dependence. There is a great deal to admire in this work. Nevertheless, we are disappointed by the compressed review and approval schedule that has been imposed,

which has precluded face-to-face meetings between Norwich Selectboard, Planning Commission and TRORC representatives. We are also disappointed that only the statutory minimum for warning the draft and holding of public hearings has been met. We recommend in the future that a more robust opportunity for public and member community input be provided that exceeds the statutory minimum and provides ample opportunity to discuss the best way to achieve shared goals.



Jaci Allen,
Chair, Norwich Planning Commission



John Pepper,
Chair, Norwich Selectboard

Conservation Commission Recommendations for Inclusion in the Land Use Chapter of the Norwich Town Plan

Ecosystem conservation requires protection of large as well as interconnected smaller expanses of forest, wetlands, mid-successional habitats, and meadows to provide adequate habitat that supports healthy wildlife populations as well as invaluable ecosystem services to the community. Climate-related disruptions have already begun and will accelerate as climate change progresses, affecting wildlife and landscape management.

Goal: To maintain large, contiguous forest ecosystems, including wooded areas, mid-successional habitats meadows, wetlands, and waterways, in order to preserve Norwich's rural character and its natural communities and to mitigate ecological disruptions from climate change or other stressors.

Actions:

1. Promote clustering of residential development in the main and outlying villages to better conserve forest integrity.
2. Implement additional zoning and subdivision rules constraining development in non-village rural areas to better conserve contiguous forest.
3. Limit road development in rural areas.
4. Encourage landowners to avoid division of property into parcels.
5. Encourage landowners to enroll land in the Current Use Program, with Conservation Easements.
6. Increase setback distances for development adjacent to wetlands, vernal pools, and waterways.
7. Strengthen the protections for surface waters, riparian zones, mast forests, cliff/ledge areas, ridgelines, core forests, forest corridors, wintering yards, prime/statewide agricultural soils, rare/threatened species and natural communities, and working landscapes in the zoning and subdivision rules.
8. Work with landowners and town officials to manage existing populations of invasive plants and prevent importing new invasive plants using best practices.
9. Work with landowners, town officials, and relevant state agencies to promote and sustain healthy, viable populations of native plants and animals.
10. Make use of educational materials and programs to promote ecological stewardship and raise awareness about the critical role of a healthy, functioning ecosystem in climate resilience.

6

**NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES**

Tuesday, July 2, 2019, 6:00pm
Tracy Hall-Meeting Room

Members Present: Jaci Allen (Chair), Susan Brink, Jeff Lubell, Emie Ciccotelli, Steve Thoms (6:30pm),
Melissa Horwitz, Leah Romano

Members Not Present: Brian Loeb, Jeff Goodrich

Public: Linda Cook

Staff: Rod Francis (Clerk)

Jaci Allen (Chair), called the meeting to order at 6:02pm

1. Approve Agenda: Brink moved and Horwitz seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried 6 — 0
2. Approve draft comments on TRORC Regional Plan: Members discussed the letter as drafted by Francis.

Brink moved and Ciccotelli seconded a motion to approve the draft comments letter (as amended) on the TRORC Regional Plan. And that the amended draft comments letter be forwarded to the Selectboard for discussion at their next meeting on July 10, 2019. Motion carried 6 — 1

Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm

Future Meetings:

Thursday, July 25, 7pm Regular Meeting
Thursday, Aug 22, 7pm Regular Meeting
Thursday, Sept 26, 7pm Regular Meeting

**NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION
DRAFT
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, June 27, 2019, Tracy Hall

Members Present: Jaci Allen (Chair), Melissa Horwitz, Emie Ciccotelli, Leah Romano, Brian Loeb, Steve Thoms, Jeff Lubell, Susan Brink

Members Not Present: Jeff Goodrich

Public: Linda Gray, Roger Arnold, Linda Cook

Staff: Rod Francis (Clerk)

Jaci Allen, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

1. Approve Agenda
 - a. Brink moved and Horwitz seconded to approve the agenda as published. Motion carried: 8 — 0

2. Meeting Objectives:
 - a. Comment on TRORC Regional Plan Draft
 - b. Discuss calendar of Town Plan feedback events
 - c. Review AT & T Wireless Communication Equipment Project under 30 VSA §248a
 - d. Vice Chair election

3. Comments from the Public – none

4. Comment on TRORC Draft Regional Plan

Francis introduced the item. Some Commissioners had attended the SB meeting the previous evening where the board had indicated that formal comments from Norwich should include options 2 through 5 as identified by Francis in his memo to the Town Manager:

 2. Limited comment in support of removing the interchange area in Norwich
 3. Suggest more clarity about scale of residential development in rural areas
 4. Suggest more flexibility around retail uses in the mixed use district when combined with residential development
 5. Suggest more attention to neighborhood amenity (including retail) in mixed use development

Commissioners agreed comments should include the lack of reasonable time to review and prepare a response and that the public outreach period should have been longer and more varied than two public hearings on sequential nights (the minimum statutory standard).

Commissioners requested that a draft comment letter be circulated by Francis ahead of a Special Meeting to approve the draft letter, and scheduled this for July 2 at 6:00pm in Tracy Hall.

Commissioners also requested that Francis seek a meeting between TRORC senior staff, the Planning Director and available commissioners.

5. Discuss calendar of Town Plan feedback events, including postcard mailing

Commissioners discussed the text of the postcard text for mailing, and were encouraged to help with envelope stuffing to get the postcard out with upcoming tax bills.

A shared Google Docs calendar was reviewed where Commissioners are recording meetings with Subject Area Experts, topic-specific public outreach meetings, and other related events. This document is a working record of the outreach undertaken for preparing the Town Plan.

Commissioner Romano raised the need to roll-out announcements in a way that maintains the public's interest and enhances participation..

Linda Gray encouraged Commissioners to invite subject area experts to topical meetings.

Francis will issue a Press Release concerning upcoming events.

Chair Allen advised the PC of the new webpage for the Town Plan, which will be populated shortly <http://norwich.vt.us/town-plan-2019/>

6. Opportunity to comment on AT&T Utility Pole proposal
Francis outlined the project and the scope for comment. Commissioners agreed that Francis should advise the applicants that no comments are forthcoming.
7. Vice Chair election: Brink nominated Horwitz, Thoms nominated Ciccotelli. Horwitz was elected to the position 5 — 2 — 1. (Lubell abstained).
8. Review and approve Minutes of 4-25-19
 - a. Horwitz moved and Brink seconded to approve the minutes of April 25, 2019 as amended. Motion Carried 7 — 0 — 1 (Loeb abstained).
9. Review Quarterly Report to Selectboard
Commissioners reviewed the Report and suggested several edits, which Allen will incorporate.
10. Discuss survey proposal from Ciccotelli
Commissioners discussed the proposal. Questions included:
 - How would the PC do it?
 - How would we establish town 'values'?
 - Is some of this data collected already (e.g. Womens Club "New to Norwich", and the MC School)
 - What would be the timeline?
 - What would be done with the information?Next step is Ciccotelli will come back with more information.

11. Other Business - None

12. Future Meeting Schedule & Agendas

Meeting Adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rod Francis

Future Meetings:

Thursday, July 25, 7pm Regular Meeting

Thursday, Aug 22, 7pm Regular Meeting

Thursday, Sept 26, 7pm Regular Meeting

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



Pam Mullen

From: John Farrell <jjtwister@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2019 4:01 PM
To: Pam Mullen
Subject: NORWICH 2019 TOWN PLAN NEWS RELEASE

Pam: I am away for 2 months and will not be able to attend any of the public input sessions on the town plan. However, I would like to state my personal view on “ the right kind of economic development” for Norwich. Norwich is just fine the way it is and I see absolutely no need to ENCOURAGE any economic development at all. It is just opening a can of worms that will irreversibly change the character of the the town forever.

John Farrell

Sent from my iPhone

8ai

Pam Mullen

From: Rod Francis
Sent: Friday, July 12, 2019 10:06 AM
To: Pam Mullen
Subject: FW: MEGA DEVELOPMENTS AGAIN

Please include in July PC packet

From: Charlotte Metcalf [<mailto:smetcalf@sover.net>]
Sent: Thursday, July 11, 2019 4:32 PM
To: Stuart Richards
Cc: Chris Katucki; Ernie Ciccotelli; fjm; Marcia Calloway; Stuart Richards; seabird37; Roger Arnold; linda cook; Miriam Richards; Dean Seibert; doug4norwichsb@gmail.com; Doug Wilberding; Pamela Thompson Smith; Nancy Dean; John Farrell; Kris Clement; Rod Francis; Herb Durfee
Subject: Re: MEGA DEVELOPMENTS AGAIN

Dear Stuart,

I have just reread the TRORC plan on land use, pages 29-45, and I do not see mega development in the crystal ball..I see a clear distinction between Norwich and Quechee. A large development at the interchange off 89 at Queechee would require duplication of town services which will not be necessary in our case..

Yesterday at the town green meeting it was evident that everyone in attendance (except John 🐱🐱) wanted to honor the character and opportunities of our core village....Post Office,bookstore,ZuZu,and above all Dan and Whit's. Several people then offered new ideas that appealed and could enhance daily life for families already in the town as well as newcomers to Route 5. Child care was one idea that was extremely well received and is seen as lacking in today's Norwich. A permanent Farmer's Market that would replace the need to rev up Tracy Hall every Saturday in the winter was also applauded. I am far less alarmed after several genuine group discussions this time than I was by the blanketreassurances the last time around.. regarding the 2018 town plan

Though it feels as if we are being pushed by the TRORC folks, I see this effort as a start for us to build on what we have while continuing to investigate ways to provide affordable housing. We need to remain on top, speak out and have confidence we are being heard and protected by those whom we have ELECTED.. If we are not patronized at meetings and if WE treat volunteers and employees with respect I think we are on our way to some understanding and positive "developments"

Thanks for listening. Hope I am right. . . .

On Jul 11, 2019, at 1:28 PM, Stuart Richards <stuartlrichards50@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Readers,

The Two Rivers-Ottaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) which sets the guidelines for growth in our region has pretty much decided that among the 30 towns in the region Norwich will be one of the towns marked for intense growth. They propose that Route 5 South become a mixed use area with commercial development and high intensity residential development linking up with Hartford. This is the same idea that our Norwich Planning Commission proposed in 2016 without some of the specifics that the Planning

Commission proposed. You may remember that public opinion was strongly negative about making this area a focus of large scale growth. For those who wish to preserve our strong village center with Dan & Whits, the Post Office, Book Store, Coffee Shop, Town Office, two restaurants and two banks, the idea of creating mixed use commercial and high intensity residential development on Route 5 South is a non starter.

I strongly disagree with making Norwich a center for growth and I've written a letter to the Executive Director at TRORC, Peter Gregory. The letter can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/y5nax4gv>

I've lived in Norwich for 35 years and I don't see the need for large scale development. If you have concerns about this it would be good to let the Selectboard, Planning Commission and Two Rivers know. I'm asking by ~~copy of this email that this email be entered into the Selectboard and Planning Commission records.~~

All the best,

Stuart Richards



From: Pamela Thompson Smith [<mailto:psmith4203@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, July 11, 2019 2:18 PM

To: Stuart Richards

Cc: norwich@lists.vitalcommunities.org; Chris Katucki; Ernie Ciccotelli; fjm; Marcia Calloway; Stuart Richards; seabird37; Roger Arnold; linda cook; Miriam Richards; Dean Seibert; doug4norwichsb@gmail.com; Doug Wilberding; Nancy Dean; John Farrell; Kris Clement; Charlotte Metcalf; Rod Francis; Herb Durfee

Subject: Re: MEGA DEVELOPMENTS AGAIN

To all,

Last night, Jeff Lubell told Charlotte Metcalf and everyone else at the SB meeting, that TRORC can develop all the plans they want, but they can't force Norwich to do anything that is not allowed in our zoning. Therefore, if Jeff is correct, it is imperative that we make sure that Norwich zoning is not changed to allow the mega developments that *mixed use* would seem to imply. He also stressed that only developments that call for more than 10 units can automatically invoke an Act 250 review.

For those who did not attend, you may wish to review the CATV recording when it becomes available.

Pam Smith

On Thu, Jul 11, 2019 at 1:29 PM Stuart Richards <stuartlrichards50@gmail.com> wrote:
Dear Readers,

The Two Rivers-Ottaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) which sets the guidelines for growth in our region has pretty much decided that among the 30 towns in the region Norwich will be one of the towns marked for intense growth. They propose that Route 5 South become a mixed use area with commercial development and high intensity residential development linking up with Hartford. This is the same idea that our Norwich Planning Commission proposed in 2016 without some of the specifics that the Planning Commission proposed. You may remember that public opinion was strongly negative about making this area a focus of large scale growth. For those who wish to preserve our strong village center with Dan & Whits, the Post Office, Book Store, Coffee Shop, Town Office, two restaurants and two banks, the idea of creating mixed use commercial and high intensity residential development on Route 5 South is a non starter.

I strongly disagree with making Norwich a center for growth and I've written a letter to the Executive Director at TRORC, Peter Gregory. The letter can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/y5nax4qv>

I've lived in Norwich for 35 years and I don't see the need for large scale development. If you have concerns about this it would be good to let the Selectboard, Planning Commission and

Two Rivers know. I'm asking by copy of this email that this email be entered into the Selectboard and Planning Commission records.

All the best,

Stuart Richards



From: Stuart Richards stuartrichards50@gmail.com
To: norwich@lists.vitalcommunities.org
Date: 07/16/19
Cc: Herb Durfee, Rod Francis
Subject: MEGA DEVELOPMENTS AGAIN EXPLAINED

Dear Readers,

In 2016 the Norwich Planning Commission reversed the normal order of town planning by proposing a new zoning district of 350 acres with densities of up to 8 units per acre encompassing route 5 South joining Hartford and Norwich. The normal order for planning is to complete a Town Plan and have zoning flow from the Town Plan. This reversal and failure to focus on what should have been a priority, completion of the Town Plan, left Norwich without a Town Plan which was allowed to expire at a cost to Norwich.

The numbers in this proposal were frightening to a lot of people and they said so. Even if you discounted parts of the 350 acres because of steep slopes, wetlands, prime ag land, Act 250 constraints and or other reasons what could've been built was hundreds of housing units and thousands of feet of commercial space in new mixed use zoning districts. This Planning Commission proposal was the genesis and reason I started using the words MEGA DEVELOPMENT which I thought accurately described a misguided effort to radically change Norwich's historic character. Currently there's only been "further study" by the Planning commission without any commitment on whether or not there will be rezoning on Route 5 South and MEGA DEVELOPMENT or whether the Planning Commission will decide to move forward in a way that encourages affordable housing per se without excessive development. It would seem that rather than leave the Town Plan and zoning up to 3 Selectboard members and 5 Planning Commissioners that the important issues involved point in the direction of having a town wide vote to see what voters really think.

If we fast forward to today's Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission's (TRORC) proposed Regional Plan for 30 towns including Norwich which proposes new mixed use high density residential and commercial districts along Route 5 South adjoining Hartford we find TRORC'S proposal is eerily similar to the Planning Commission's proposal. TRORC's proposal treats Norwich as a town where large amounts of commercial and residential development should be promoted i.e. - MEGA DEVELOPMENT. TRORC ignores state requirements that large scale development near interstate interchanges should be avoided. TRORC also ignores the impact that large scale development will have on Norwich's central downtown district, that intense development will require municipal sewage and significantly affect our tax rates. Most people in town really like Dan and Whit's and all the other services in our compact business district. Why would we want to set up competitors to Dan & Whit's or the other services in our compact business district? Don't we have enough services? The State of Vermont says that downtown business districts should be strengthened not weakened.

I happen to like our small town of 3,400 people. And I confess to liking the size of Vermont better when I first got here 50 years ago when there were 425,000 rather than the 625,000 that live here now. But I'm not alone apparently. About 55% of respondents in both a 2005 and 2018 survey said they wanted to see Norwich's population either reduced or remain relatively stable. As far as the TRORC plan is concerned Norwich doesn't have to follow its guidelines. We can if we wish adopt a Town Plan and Zoning that represents our goals and values even if they differ from what TRORC recommends although that will likely mean loss of state funding for future planning efforts. The notion that Norwich should be a high growth area as TRORC recommends is not what most people want. I wrote a letter to Peter Gregory, Executive Director of TRORC expressing my concerns and disagreement with the proposed plan. You can find the letter here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5nax4gv>

Norwich is currently surrounded by high growth residential and commercial development. There currently are more than 1,000 residential units either under construction or in the permit process in Lebanon and Hartford. These towns/cities have the infrastructure and the desire to promote this kind of development. Dartmouth Hitchcock and Dartmouth College have been the main drivers in the suburbanization of a formerly rural area. The 3 expansions of the hospital represent the three largest construction projects ever in New Hampshire and the hospital is the largest employer in NH with more than 12,000 employees statewide. There are those, myself included, who would like to see small scale incremental development rather than mega developments which include the commercialization and suburbanization of Norwich.

With respect to affordable housing it's unfortunate that there is less today in Norwich than there has been in the past. It is distressing to see the loss of farms, blue collar workers, single parents and native Vermonters who either can't or choose not to live in Norwich. Back in 2002 as former Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee I wrote a Minority Report. It is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5zntop> At the time I estimated that 22.6% of Norwich's housing stock was affordable. My opinions caused my removal as Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee. The numbers today are far different: <https://tinyurl.com/y3wjksa9> Over the years the Affordable Housing Committee, Planning Commission and Selectboard have attempted to establish a framework which would enable affordable housing. It's unfortunate that they've failed and that they failed to support the recent effort by Norwich Affordable Housing Inc. that might have created 7 affordable housing units.

Clearly the creation of affordable housing should be an important goal but it's not an easy task especially when the goal is small scale affordable housing. After Norwich's Town Plan was unanimously rejected by the TRORC board the Planning Commission embarked on a rewrite. Their efforts are ongoing now. I hope that those who have thoughts about the future direction of Norwich will step forward and voice their opinions. I also hope that we get a chance to vote on the future Town Plan and future zoning.

Herb and Rod I would appreciate it if you would make this email and the attachments a part of the records of the Selectboard, the Planning Commission and the Affordable Housing SubCommittee.

Full disclosure - In the past I've served on the Norwich Planning Commission, The Waitsfield Planning Commission, former Chair of the Norwich Affordable Housing Committee, Member Norwich Sewer Committee, Director Norwich Affordable Housing Inc., Founder Ford Sayre Academy. The above comments are my personal views.

All the best,

Stuart Richards
802-649-3928



STUART L. RICHARDS
PO Box 156, #82 Elm Street
Norwich, Vermont 05055
Tel: 802-649-3928
Fax: 802-649-3928

July 10, 2019

Mr. Peter Gregory, Executive Director
128 King Farm Rd, Woodstock, VT 05091
Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission

Dear Peter,

I am deeply concerned that the proposed TRORC Regional Plan will result in undesirable changes to the historic character of Norwich. As you know Norwich is a small Town of 3,400 people. The new TRORC plan proposes that Norwich grow much larger and that it change significantly. The proposal for a larger Town Center which would replace the existing small village would be hurtful to existing businesses in the Village. The plan also includes changing current zoning districts and adding zoning districts along Route 5 South to promote intense residential development and commercial development in new mixed used zoning districts which will detract from the strong small village which Norwich residents have time and time again said they wish to strengthen.

TRORC'S plan will lead to strip commercial development and intense residential development and sprawl along Route 5 South and exacerbate an already difficult traffic and safety problem during many hours of the day at Ledyard bridge. Norwich has always been a bedroom community with extremely low unemployment. The vast majority of residents work in Hanover, Lebanon or White River. The notion that jobs need to be created in Norwich is misguided. Creating commercial activities along Route 5 South would be harmful to Dan & Whit's, other businesses and the core Village. Encouraging sprawl along Route 5 South should be discouraged, not encouraged as this plan does.

Because of lack of sewage on Route 5 South proposed changes are premised on hooking into Hartford's sewage treatment facility. It remains to be seen what the costs would be and who would pay for future development. The initial costs, operating costs and expansion costs will be expensive. Adding to the already heavy tax burden in Norwich would be a non-starter.

In 2016 the attempt by the Norwich Planning Commission to develop Route 5 South as a mixed used zoning district met with a hostile reception from Norwich Residents. That proposal is dead. It would be a mistake for TRORC to try and promote a similar proposal especially where there has been insufficient time and a lack of publicity to gain public input.

I'm hoping that there is still time to reconsider the rezoning that TRORC is proposing so that Norwich can be in compliance with TRORC's proposed plan and so that the plan can promote the goals of Norwich residents. I appreciate your considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Stuart L. Richards

SLR: mtf

From: Robert Lewy rl10@caa.columbia.edu
Sent: 7/23/2019
To: Herb Durfee
Cc: Miranda Bergmeier, Rod Francis No
Subject: MEGA DEVELOPMENT

Thank you very much!

On Mon, Jul 22, 2019 at 2:50 PM Herb Durfee <HDurfee@norwich.vt.us> wrote:

Robert,

I'm in receipt of your e-mail, and I'll include it as Correspondence in the next Selectboard meeting packet. Note: the Board's next regular meeting isn't until Aug 28. But, I copied Rod Francis, Director of Planning & Zoning on this e-mail, since the Planning Commission currently is revising the Town Plan.

Herb

Herbert A. Durfee, III

Town Manager

Town of Norwich

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From: Robert Lewy [<mailto:rl10@caa.columbia.edu>]
Sent: Monday, July 22, 2019 2:12 PM

To: Herb Durfee
Subject: No MEGA Development

Dear Mr. Durfee,

As a Norwich resident, I am strongly opposed to any MEGA development along the Route 5 corridor. I am wondering if it would be possible to preserve this land to keep it forever green.

Thank you and I would appreciate if this will become a part of the Selectboard minutes.

Robert Lewy