

Norwich Planning Commission Special Meeting – November 7, 2023 6:30pm

To be Held in person in the Tracy Hall Multipurpose Room and via Zoom
Zoom Information:

Topic: Planning Commission

Time: November 7, 2023, 6:30 PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81307504748>

Meeting ID: 813 0750 4748

888 475 4499 US Toll-free

1. Approve Agenda
2. Public comment for items not on agenda
3. Correspondence
Beth Baras email re: Rental Housing in Norwich, 10-31-23 [\[Packet\]](#)
4. Chair notes
Connecticut River hydro re-license [\[Packet\]](#)
Rt 5 Bicycle corridor [\[Packet\]](#)
P&Z documents – use of website
Selectboard handbook draft
Thetford zoning bylaws
5. Planning & Zoning staff
Review job summary [\[Packet\]](#)
6. (7:30) AHSC Joint session – New Boston Rd planning grant application [\[Packet\]](#)
7. Planning Commission Annual report submittal
Review draft [\[Packet\]](#)
8. Subcommittee updates
Multi-modal transportation
Solar siting
Land use
9. Approve Minutes
October 10, 2023 [\[Packet\]](#)
September 19, 2023 [\[Packet\]](#)
September 12, 2023 [\[Packet\]](#)
10. Public comment
11. Adjourn

From: Beth Baras <beth.baras@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 2:20 PM
To: Pam Mullen <PMullen@norwich.vt.us>
Subject: Rental housing in Norwich

Hello Pam -

I read the Housing Committee proposal and would like to comment that the prices for rentals in Norwich listed as approx \$1200/mo for a 2 bd are way too low and not representative of prices landlord/owners are really charging.

I hope as part of this needs assessment that a new assessment of what people are charging for rentals, who they are renting to, and size and type of rental.

I've been renting in the same place for 15 years on Ladeau Rd - a studio summer-only insulated camp that is rented to me as a year-round rental. I pay \$1100 plus I pay all utilities. I've been looking for years to find a warmer, nicer 1 bd place to rent but prices are way above my budget-like over \$2400/mo plus utilities. And with 2 cats, even with a 504 federal exemption, pets are rarely accepted. Homes for rent are over \$4500/mo.

I was on the Affordable Housing Committee several years ago and spoke with some homeowners who have rental units. They told me they could easily rent to Dartmouth grad students who can afford to pay highly inflated rents like \$2400/mo for a studio, and they used that income to pay their property taxes.

The only senior housing in town is old, in need of updating, has no elevator, with a 14 year waiting list and 1 pet limit run by Simpson Properties who doesn't maintain or repair their properties.

This is a real problem in Norwich and the UV. I hope in the process of creating housing that there will be efforts to find out what the income is of those of us who rent and live in Norwich who may rent from private owners, as well as from any property managers, what our needs are including pets or need for senior housing, and that applications for housing is limited to rental residents to meet income requirements. And that current rental units be reassessed with tax incentives or other given to owners/landlords to rent current rental units/ homes to those of us who live in town but cannot afford their rental prices. Please encourage them to make prices affordable and rent to income qualified renters only.

I hope you pass this on to others who have the ability to make change in our community. I've been in touch with Bernie Sanders and shared the same information - he agrees with the need.

Than you

Beth Baras
Age 67 single senior with my 2 kitties
91 A Ladeau Rd
Cell 603-448-1170

From: Kate Buckman <kbuckman@ctriver.org>
Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 5:28 PM
To: Kate Buckman <kbuckman@ctriver.org>
Cc: Kathy Urffer <kurffer@ctriver.org>
Subject: Connecticut River hydro relicensing updates

Hello, the Connecticut River Conservancy is reaching out to request an opportunity for our River Stewards to update your town leaders on the status of the relicensing of the Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon hydro facilities and to inform how your town may engage as the process (finally!) begins to move forward again.

You should have recently received a letter mailed directly to your town office that detailed our participation in the process thus far, the next (and final) opportunities to make your voices heard, and our offer to meet with your Selectboard and/or Conservation Commission to more fully explain the issues and process. If you have responded to that letter already, thank you...and no need to read further.

In summary, these three dams on the mainstem Connecticut River are currently undergoing relicensing, a process which will determine how they are operated and impact the river (and your river towns) for the next 40+ years. This process has been underway since 2013, and after a long wait, we are anticipating that FERC will announce a public comment period on the final license application over the coming months. The public process for issuing a 401-water quality certificate in both NH and VT will get underway shortly after. **These are the last two opportunities for your concerns to be heard in this once in a lifetime relicensing process.** Comments by communities are critical to ensure that FERC understands and responds to local concerns and desires. We value your knowledge and input!

CRC is willing to provide information on what has happened in the process since the last time we may have talked with your town, share our concerns about the final license application, and discuss how your town can participate in the final stages of this process. If we can join you for a meeting before the end of November, we think this will provide enough time for your Selectboard, Conservation Commission, or other town office to determine any course of action or comments you would like to submit.

If you would like to request a meeting please contact:

In Vermont: Kathy Urffer - kurffer@ctriver.org 802-258-0413

In New Hampshire: Kate Buckman - kbuckman@ctriver.org 603-931-2448

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate Buckman

Kate Buckman

She/Her/Hers

River Steward, NH

Connecticut River Conservancy, formerly *Connecticut River Watershed Council*
PO Box 445 | Alstead NH 03602 | www.ctriver.org
413-772-2020 ext. 205 | 603-931-2448 (cell)

Clean Water, Healthy Habitat, Thriving Communities.





Connecticut River Conservancy

Clean water. Healthy habitat. Thriving communities.

PO Box 6219 | Brattleboro, VT 05302
802.258.0413 · www.ctriver.org

September 27, 2023

Dear Town Leader,

We are reaching out to request an opportunity to come visit with your Conservation Commission and/ or Selectboard to update you on the relicensing of the Vernon, Bellows Falls, and Wilder hydroelectric facilities.

As you may know, these hydro facilities, owned by Great River Hydro, are approaching the home stretch of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process. The new license that results from this process will direct operations at these facilities for the next 40+ years. Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) has been involved in this relicensing process since it started in 2013, advocating for better environmental protections for the river and mitigation of impacts to the river and adjacent communities.

CRC expects that FERC will announce a formal comment period on the final license application over the coming months. We also expect the public process for issuing a 401-water quality certification in both VT and NH will commence soon after this announcement from FERC. **These are the last two opportunities for your concerns to be heard in this once in a lifetime relicensing process.**

Comments by communities are critical to ensure that FERC understands and responds to local concerns and desires. Local community members can provide invaluable knowledge of how town lands, natural resources, and wildlife populations have been and may continue to be affected by hydro operations. We value your knowledge and input!

We are reaching out to request an opportunity to come visit with your Conservation Commission and/ or Selectboard to update you on this relicensing process and next steps. We can provide information on what has happened since the last time we may have talked with your town, share our concerns about the final license application, and discuss how your town can participate in the final stages of this process to ensure you have a voice in how our public trust river is used. **If we can join you for a meeting before the end of November, we think this will provide enough time for your Selectboard to determine any course of action or comments you'd like to submit.**

Please contact Kathy Urffer at the email or phone number below to schedule a time for us to present to your town. You can also visit our webpage for more information (<https://www.ctriver.org/our-work/hydropower/>). We hope to hear from you soon and look forward to working with you to engage in this process.

Sincerely,

Kathy Urffer, River Steward, VT
kurffer@ctriver.org; 802-258-0413



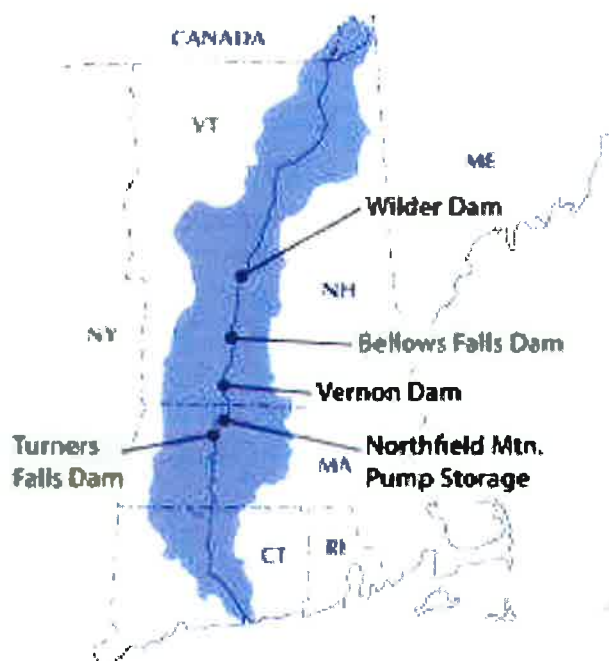
Connecticut River
Conservancy

Five Hydro Facilities Now! The heart of the Connecticut River's next 50 years.

Since late 2012, five hydroelectric facilities in the heart of the Connecticut River valley have been in the process of renewing their operating licenses in a process known as relicensing. **The licenses for two facilities in northern MA and three dams in southern VT and NH will endure for the next 30-50 years and impact more than 175 miles of the Connecticut River.** It's critical that we all speak up NOW in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to influence these operating licenses.

The three dams at Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon in New Hampshire and Vermont are owned by [Great River Hydro](#) (formerly TransCanada), a subsidiary of Hydro-Québec, the largest power utility in Canada whose sole shareholder is the Québec government.

The two Massachusetts facilities, Turners Falls Dam and Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project, are now separate LLCs under [First Light Power Services LLC](#), owned by PSP Investments, one of Canada's largest pension investment managers.



The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) last issued licenses for these facilities over forty years ago and all five licenses initially expired in April 2018.

Next Steps

Comments by local communities, the states, individuals, and other stakeholders provide a rare opportunity to improve the health of our river. The current relicensing process for these five hydropower facilities will dramatically affect the health of the river and watershed for generations to come. [Anyone with thoughts or concerns can comment](#) and those comments become part of the official record for that project.

CRC river stewards Kelsey Wentling (MA), Kate Buckman (NH), and Kathy Urffer (VT) are participating in all the formal proceedings related to this relicensing effort. They review reports, prepare CRC comments, and are working to engage the public in the process. They would be glad to answer any of your questions or speak to your group about the relicensing.

Both companies submitted revised final applications in December 2020. Since then, the companies engaged in some specific settlement discussions to resolve some of the issues. FERC will review all application documents and issue a request for the public to comment and formally intervene. CRC expects a public comment period sometime in fall of 2023 or winter of 2023-2024.

CRC'S ROLE

CRC's desired outcomes and priority areas where CRC is advocating for change include:

- Safe, timely, and effective upstream and downstream fish passage
- Operational changes at the dams to minimize surface water fluctuations both upstream and downstream to minimize bank erosion and impacts to rare and threatened species
- Healthy aquatic habitat for river critters
- Seasonally appropriate minimum flows in the river channel
- Ecologically compatible and accessible recreational facilities
- Protection and interpretation of historic and archeological resources
- Consideration of Traditional Cultural Properties

YOUR ROLE: YOU have a say!

It is important for the public and municipalities **to submit comments** to make sure that local concerns and desires are voiced and are responded to as part of the new license. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is interested in maintaining these energy facilities and they are in constant communication with the companies as a course of their relationship as regulators. FERC needs to hear from the public to understand and balance local ecological and public access concerns.

Hydroelectric facilities use a **public trust resource – your river – to produce power**. In exchange for this privilege, FERC requires that hydropower operators provide *direct benefits to the public*, be protective of the ecological health of *the river*, and mitigate for impacts of the dams. The license serves as a public contract that we revisit periodically to examine the impact of the facility on our public trust resource.

There are official comment periods at different stages of licensing, and you can file comments, concerns, or complaints... **AND YOU SHOULD!**

See the instructions on our website about how to submit comments. CRC encourages public participation and our staff is glad to help answer any question that you may have.

www.ctriver.org/hydropower

Please find a link below to the survey developed by VTrans regarding interest and prioritization of a bicycle corridor on or along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. Highway 5. We are asking for **1 response from each RPC** as well as **2 responses from each town along the corridor**, 1 from the

Select Board Chair and 1 from the Planning Commission Chair. We would like your assistance disseminating this survey to the towns in your region for which this is applicable.

In the survey, participants will respond to questions about their town or regions interest in undertaking a future planning study for a bicycle corridor along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. 5 for approximately 190 miles between the Vermont-Massachusetts border and the Vermont-Quebec border. For the purposes of this survey, a bicycle corridor will refer to facilities that support transportation by bicycle that may be provided on the highway or separated and adjacent to the highway.

In addition, you'll be asked some contextual information about how the corridor is used, as well as if there are locations of opportunity or concern the Vermont Agency of Transportation should be aware of.

If you'd like to discuss this project in greater detail, please reach out to Lauren.Masseria@vermont.gov.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/route5survey>

Thank you!

Lauren Masseria (she/her) | Regional Planning Coordinator

Policy, Planning & Intermodal Development Division

Vermont Agency of Transportation

[219 North Main Street, Barre, VT 05641](#)

802.498.4346 | lauren.masseria@vermont.gov

LAUREN MASSERIA
VERMONT AOT
9/14/2023

Route 5 Survey Goals & Timeline

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTIVE

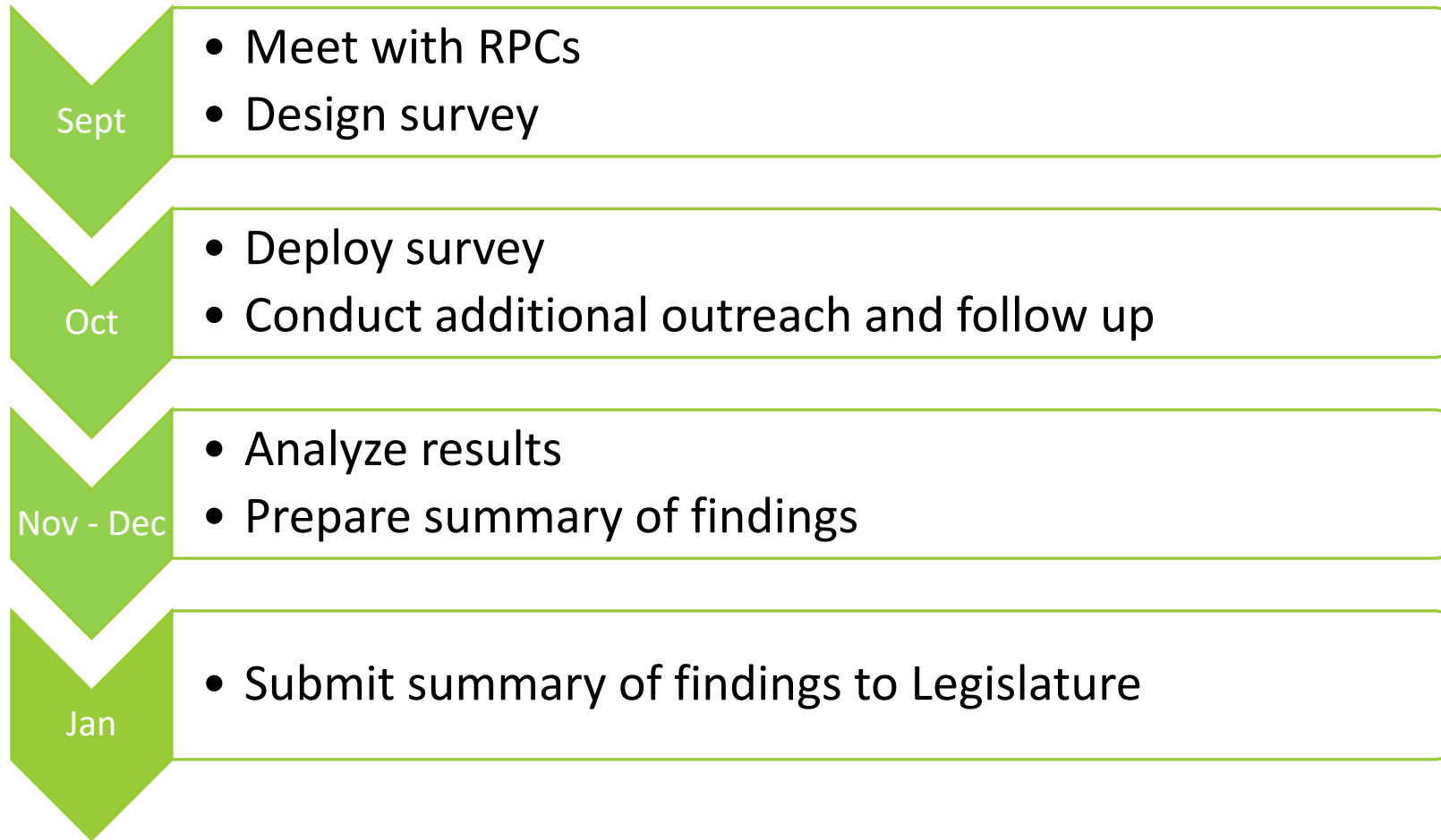
The Agency of Transportation, **in partnership with regional planning commissions** through the annual Transportation Planning Initiative, shall conduct a survey of **municipal support for the creation of a bicycle corridor**—consisting of one or more segments of bicycle lanes or bicycle paths, or both—to provide a safe means of travel via bicycle on or along a route that is **roughly adjacent to U.S. Route 5** for the approximately 190 miles spanning between the State border with Massachusetts and the State border with Quebec, Canada.

The survey shall address **the level of interest of municipalities and regional planning commissions** in prioritizing the creation of a bicycle corridor along some or all of U.S. Route 5, **including the consideration of the costs of creation and benefits to the tourism industry** in Vermont in general and to the municipalities along U.S. Route 5 in particular.

OVERALL GOALS

- Tasked by the Legislature to survey Regional Planning Commissions and Municipalities
- Survey will assess the creation of a bicycle corridor that is roughly adjacent to US Route 5 for the 190 miles from Massachusetts to Canada
- The survey will also address:
 - Level of interest and prioritization
 - Locations of interest and/or concern
 - Corridor use and user information

Timeline



Questions?

Lauren.Masseria@vermont.gov

Lauren.Masseria@vermont.gov

Matthew.Arancio@vermont.gov



U.S. Highway 5 Bicycle Corridor Priority Assessment Survey

In this survey, you will respond to questions about your town or regions interest in undertaking a future planning study for a bicycle corridor on or along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. 5 for approximately 190 miles between the Vermont-Massachusetts border and the Vermont-Quebec border. For the purposes of this survey, a bicycle corridor will refer to facilities that support transportation by bicycle that may be provided on the highway or separated and adjacent to the highway.

In addition, you'll be asked some contextual information about how the corridor is used, as well as if there are locations of opportunity or concern the Vermont Agency of Transportation should be aware of.

VTrans is seeking input from:

- 1 response from each RPC along the corridor
- 2 responses from each town along the corridor, 1 response from the Selectboard Chair on behalf of the Selectboard and 1 response from the Planning Commission Chair on behalf of the Planning Commission

Survey responses will be collected through November 17th, 2023.

[Click here to view a preview of the survey questions.](#) If you'd like to discuss this project in greater detail, please reach out to Lauren.Masseria@vermont.gov.

Survey must be completed online:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/route5survey>

U.S. Highway 5 Bicycle Corridor Priority Assessment Survey

In this survey, you will respond to questions about your town or regions interest in undertaking a future planning study for a bicycle corridor on or along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. 5 for approximately 190 miles between the Vermont-Massachusetts border and the Vermont-Quebec border. For the purposes of this survey, a bicycle corridor will refer to facilities that support transportation by bicycle that may be provided on the highway or separated and adjacent to the highway.

In addition, you'll be asked some contextual information about how the corridor is used, as well as if there are locations of opportunity or concern the Vermont Agency of Transportation should be aware of.

VTrans is seeking input from each RPC along the corridor as well as 2 responses from each town along the corridor, 1 from the Selectboard Chair on behalf of the Selectboard and 1 from the Planning Commission Chair on behalf of the Planning Commission.

Survey responses will be collected through November 17th, 2023.

If you'd like to discuss this project in greater detail, please reach out to Lauren.Masseria@vermont.gov.

Please enter your name below.

Please enter your email address below.

Please select the professional role for which you are responding to this survey:

- Regional Planning Commission
- Municipal Select Board Chair on behalf of the Select Board
- Municipal Planning Commission Chair on behalf of the Planning Commission

--- Logic---

If Regional Planning Commission is chosen:

Please choose which commission you are responding on behalf of:

If Municipal response is chosen:

Please choose which municipality you are responding on behalf of:

Is your organization supportive of a planning study related to a future bicycle corridor on or along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. 5? Please note that while project funding and timeline have not

been defined, the scale of this effort will require financial support in the form of local investment or funding match.

- Yes
- No

--- Logic---

If no is chosen:

Please explain why your organization is not supportive of a bicycle corridor on or along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. 5.

How important is improving bicycling conditions on or along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. 5. in your town or region?

- Not important
- Somewhat important
- Very important

How would you anticipate a bicycle corridor on or along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. 5 to be used in your town or region? *Please choose up to 5 responses.*

- Local and/or regional transportation
- Connection to local destinations (within community)
- Connection regional destinations (nearby communities)
- Commute to and from place of employment
- Connection to schools, college, and/or university
- Connection to restaurants or other entertainment
- For grocery or other shopping
- Exercise and health
- Socializing or community building events and activities
- Access to outdoor recreation opportunities
- Connection to existing trail networks in the region
- Other

How do you rate present bicycling conditions on U.S. 5 in your town or region?

- Poor
- Fair
- Excellent

What factors currently DISCOURAGE bicycling on U.S. 5 in your town or region? *Please choose up to 5 responses.*

- Lack of connected facilities (multi-use paths, sidewalks and bicycle lanes)
- Deficient or unmaintained facilities (multi-use paths, sidewalks or bicycle lanes)
- Lack of information about existing facilities (multi-use paths, sidewalks and bicycle lanes)
- Unsure of safe routes
- Unsafe street crossings
- Hazardous or unsafe railroad crossings
- Steep Hills
- Destinations are too far

- Aggressive motorist behavior
- Narrow shoulders
- Significant vehicular traffic on route
- Lack of workplace amenities (showers, bike racks)
- Lack of nearby destinations
- Personal safety concerns
- Requires a high level of fitness to bike along Route 5
- Lack of bicycle shops in the region
- Other

Thinking about your town or region, are there specific destinations you feel should be highlighted and incorporated into the planning and development of a bicycle corridor adjacent to U.S. 5. Please list up to 5 locations below.

Thinking about your town or region, are there specific locations along U.S. 5 that you observe significant vehicular traffic and would benefit from additional inquiry? Please list up to 3 locations below.

Thinking about your town or region, are there specific locations along U.S. 5 that you consider particularly dangerous? Please list up to 3 locations below.

Thinking about your town or region, are there any specific locations along U.S. 5 that you observe high volumes of bicycle and pedestrian activity? Please list up to 3 locations below.

If you have any additional comments or concerns, please feel free to share them below.

Town of Norwich, Planning Director and Zoning Administrator Candidate – Final Draft 10/26/23

Job Duties, Personal Characteristics, and Qualifications

Duties and Responsibilities:

Serves as the public liaison connecting Norwich residents, businesses, and developers, who may be seeking information and guidance on land use permits, with the Development Review Board (DRB). This Zoning Administrator (ZA) function requires a thorough knowledge of State and local regulations and involves answering technical questions, interpreting ordinances and regulations for administrative approval, assisting the DRB with subject matter expertise and administrative support during the formal application review process, and generally assisting applicants through the permitting process. Estimation that ZA specific functions of this role may occupy 40-50% of a normal workweek.

Facilitates planning related initiatives mutually agreed upon with the Town's administration and its various boards of elected and appointed officials. This would include working closely (attending meetings and being regularly available) with the Planning Commission on policy-related tasks such as periodic review and possible amendments to the Town Plan and Zoning bylaws.

Works with various groups and committees on achieving common goals and initiatives such as facilitating more affordable housing, safe roadways, historic preservation focused projects, and generally leading work in a collaborative manner between staff and internal and external groups.

Identifies, pursues, and administers outside funding/resources to assist the Planning Office and its many internal stakeholders (PC, DRB HPC) to efficiently complete projects and objectives.

Directs and oversees all aspects of the Planning and Zoning Dept. including supervision of the Planning Assistant.

Personal Characteristics and Attributes:

Dynamic and collaborative leader, who will, in conjunction with the Town's many diverse groups of boards, officials and residents, help craft and guide Norwich's long-term vision.

Ability to work effectively with diverse groups to find common goals and help facilitate their attainment.

Willingness to engage and become invested in the Norwich community and to serve as a facilitator and champion of mutually agreed upon initiatives, such as affordable housing, bike-pedestrian safety and walkability, municipal plan review and updates, and the review and possible amendments of current zoning and subdivision regulations.

Specific education and work experience in the fields of municipal planning and zoning administration, and familiarity, or the ability to quickly become familiar, with Vermont's State statutes (primarily VSA 24 Chapter 117) and local regulations around land use planning, regulatory principles, techniques, and best practices.

Willingness and aptitude to learn along with strong interpersonal skills and verbal and written communication skills.

Minimum Qualifications:

3-5 years' work experience in a similar leadership role or position.

B.A. degree, or equivalent education and work experience, in a planning or related professional capacity.

Some supervisory experience is desirable.

Vermont Community Development Program

Planning Grant Application

Instructions:

https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/VCDP/Applicant/CD-VCDP-Planning-Grant-Instructions.pdf

Executive Summary

Please identify the working title for your project, once saved the title used will be the title that will appear when hovering over the application identifier within the system.

Norwich affordable housing site assessment

This Planning Grant will cover the site and regulatory analysis to determine the suitability of part of a town-owned parcel for development of affordable housing. It will include an assessment of the topography, natural and archaeological resources, capacity for on-site wastewater disposal and potable water, optimal siting, design and access options, and the feasibility and demand for the housing concepts that may be a good fit for the site. Integral to the project will be a process of public consultation with low- and moderate-income households, not limited to current town residents, who would be the beneficiaries of development efforts undertaken subsequent to the planning grant period in the event the development is found to be feasible. The final product will be a report laying out the capacity of the site for affordable housing, project options and constraints, and recommendations for next steps.

Consortium

If applying as a consortium, mark yes and then mark each applicable municipality checkbox in the list labeled 'Participating Municipalities'. A consortium is formed when two or more municipalities submit a joint application with one municipality agreeing to serve as the lead grantee.

No

Chief Executive Officer

List the name and title of the elected Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the municipality. In the case of a joint application, it is the name of the lead applicant's CEO that should be entered. For those municipalities with a municipal manager or administrator, this person can act as the CEO if so authorized by the elected governing body (city council, board of selectmen or trustees), to act on behalf of the municipality.

Brennan Duffy, Town Manager

Contact Person

Please provide the name of the person designated to be your day-to-day contact for the VCDP with respect to the application. This person shall be responsible for:

- *keeping all applicant partners advised as to application progress and communication with the VCDP*
- *providing the VCDP information as may be needed during the application review process*
- *securing decisions from the applicant(s) and others involved with the project with respect to any issues about the project which may arise during application review*

TBD

Person who prepared this application

If we have questions or need clarification, it is a big help to have the name of the person who did the work of putting together the application. If the Contact Person did the work, just indicate that this is the case. The Grantee Roles & Capacity page should also be completed in the application.

Brian Loeb, Member, Affordable Housing Subcommittee

Jeff Lubell, Chair, Affordable Housing Subcommittee

Estimated Project Funding

This section automatically populates based on the budget pages that you fill out in the online system. No dollar amounts will appear in this field until you have built your budget pages and saved this page.

Subgrantee and Borrower

If your project involves a subgrant or loan, the legal name, complete address, DUNS# and Federal ID# for the subgrantee and borrower are required. Select N/A if your project does not have a Subgrantee or Borrower.

National and State Objectives

National Objectives

- Low-Moderate Income (LMI) - Provide a benefit primarily to persons with very low, low and moderate incomes. If you propose to meet the National Objectives by serving persons of very low, low, and moderate income, please bear in mind that you will be required to document that the project has achieved the proposed benefit within the grant period by demonstrating that at least 51% of the individuals served are persons of low- or moderate-income. *Please Note: Any projects being considered under a Planning Grant must have the potential for providing benefit where at least 51% of those served would be persons with very low, low or moderate incomes.

State Objectives

- Housing - Conserve, expand, and improve housing.
- Economic Development - Create and retain jobs.

Program Management and General Administration

General Administration

General Administration activities relate to the overall management of the VCDP grant. These functions are common to any VCDP grant and include environmental review, financial management, progress reports, requisitions, procurement and final program reports/closeout, among others.

Procured According to VCDP Standards

Goods and services, such as buying supplies, retaining design professionals and awarding construction contracts are all subject to procurement procedures. The appropriate method for any given product or service is dependent on the estimated cost or price, whether the procurement is for a service or product, the type of contract to be utilized, whether the service or product is unique, whether there is any eligible, qualified competition. The key element of procurement is that the entire process provides for full and open competition.

Environmental Review Release

You must secure an Environmental Review Release (ER) letter from the Agency prior to obligating any funds, such as offering contracts, beginning planning work, or requisitioning CDBG funds.

Project Description

Service Area

Indicate the area/region your project will service. This can be as small as a neighborhood in your town or could encompass a county or larger region.

SPAN: 450-142-12272 – This is a 24+/- acre parcel owned by the town that houses, in the southern section, the town's Department of Public Works (DPW) facility and the transfer station. The parcel is taller than it is wide and includes flat wooded areas at the northwestern and northern edges of the property that are far from the transfer station and DPW facility and could potentially be used to develop housing without interfering with the continued operations of the DPW facility and transfer station. The site includes slopes, which is one reason a planning grant is needed to determine project feasibility. The assessment will consider which of several possible options for accessing the proposed development site is optimal; if needed, abutting landowners have expressed their willingness to consider an easement that would allow access to the site through their property.

Floodplain

Under the Environmental Review process, you must consider the potential impact the project may have to a designated floodplain. Contact the relevant town clerk, regional

planning commission, or the FEMA Map Service to obtain a copy of the floodplain map covering your project area.

Designated Downtown/Village

Towns and villages that receive downtown/village designation are eligible for a number of benefits, including tax credits, loans and grants from various state agencies, and priority consideration from other state programs and agencies.

Not applicable for project site.

Budget

Budget Considerations for General Administration

All planning grants must have General Administration in the budget. These are costs related to the overall management of the VCDP grant. General Administration work common to any VCDP grant includes environmental review, financial management, progress reports, requisitions, procurement, the final program reports/closeout, among others.

1. Up to eight percent of the VCDP request (not the total project cost) for all grant types and projects, other than scattered site housing developments, may be budgeted for General Administration activities. If this amount calculates to be less than \$5,000.00, the grantee can request up to \$5,000 provided it does not exceed 12% of the VCDP request. However, AM projects are limited to 8%, even if this results in an amount less than \$5,000. More than 8% may be allowed, on a case-by-case basis, provided the applicant demonstrates that a larger amount is necessary for the project.
2. Up to twelve percent of the VCDP request may be budgeted for General Administration activities for regional scattered site housing loan programs and regional small business loan programs.

Budget Considerations for Program Management

There is no Program Management activity associated with Planning Grants. Please include any budget considerations for program management in your Planning activity budget.

Other Budget Considerations:

- 10% Match Requirement: Planning Grants must include a cash or cash-in-kind contribution of goods and/or services of a flat 10% of the CDBG funds requested. All Cash-In-Kind contributions must have an associated dollar value.
- Pre-Award Costs: Applicants who receive an award may be reimbursed through the Grant Agreement for pre-award costs such as the fees charged by professionals (architects, engineers, archeologists, lawyers, etc.) in the preparation of the applications with pre-approval from VCDP staff. Such costs will not be reimbursable to applicants who do not receive an award. These costs should be clearly identified in the application.

Project budget

Activity	Number	Cost	Sub-total
Wetland analysis, conceptual planning, and schematic design	-	\$34,000	\$34,000
Archeological Resources Assessment	-	\$4,000	\$4,000
Market Study	-	\$4,000	\$4,000
Legal services and surveying	-	\$13,000	\$13,000
General Administration	-	\$5,000	\$5,000
Total request			\$60,000
Outreach	X hrs. volunteer X hrs. Town Manager		
Legal services	X hours town counsel		
Total town contribution			\$6,000
Total project budget			\$66,000

NarrativePriorities of the Consolidated Plan

Each project must meet at least one of the priorities indicated in the Consolidated Plan. Due to the critical and on-going need for the creation and retention of quality jobs and housing throughout Vermont, the highest priority for VCDP funding will be housing and economic development projects. In your response please speak to how your project meets the priorities in the Consolidated Plan.

Regional Needs - Housing

All housing projects will be evaluated based on the regional need and the ability of the proposed project to address that need. Applicants should review the 2015-2020 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment and respond accordingly.

Priorities of the Regional Plan

Most projects have impacts beyond the borders of the applicant municipality. Your response to this question should indicate the regional goal(s) that the project is meeting and how the project meets the goal(s). Additionally, the implications of the project must be considered, and a written statement that the project is not at odds with the ongoing regional initiatives must be provided from the regional commission(s).

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Please confirm with your local Regional Development Corporation that your region has an approved CEDS and that your project is consistent with it.

Project Need

Project Need is Well-Documented (e.g., studies, updated data, etc.)

1. *Describe the need for this project.*

** Back up your statement with studies, research and data. Avoid generalized statements with no substantial data or evidence.*

A recent study conducted by the Keys to the Valley initiative, a joint project of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission and Mount Ascutney Regional Commission, suggests that the broader Upper Valley region needs an additional 10,000 homes by 2030.¹ In addition to the housing crisis's direct impacts on low- and moderate-income households, area employers report that they are unable to fill positions or retain employees because of a lack of affordable housing.

Norwich is well located near the regional job centers in White River Junction and in Hanover and Lebanon, NH, and the town has high performing schools. But there is very little existing, dedicated affordable housing, naturally occurring affordable housing, or prospective new housing development at any price point. No dedicated affordable housing has been built in Norwich in over 15 years. The Planning Grant will lay the groundwork for a project at the best-available unused parcel of land owned by the town, in close proximity to homes valued in excess of \$1 million. Affordable housing in this desirable location would help address this regional and local affordable housing deficit.

Norwich has a low level of new homebuilding activity, concentrated at the higher end of the price spectrum on large lots located a significant distance from the town center. The existing housing stock is no more accessible to new residents, since the town consistently has among the highest housing prices in the state. The low volume of home sales in Norwich and other small towns makes these rankings fluctuate, but, for example, according to the accumulated 2023 year-to-date property transfer tax records through June 30², the median sales price in Norwich for residential property under six acres was \$578,000, and for over six acres it was \$1.125 million. Local realtors report intense competition, even at these high prices, meaning those households who are able to purchase homes have the means to make large downpayments or make all-cash offers. The high interest-rate environment exacerbates the challenges facing moderate- or even middle-income would-be homebuyers.

¹ <https://www.keystothevalley.com/report/2030-home-projections/>

² <https://tax.vermont.gov/document/statistics-ptt-2023-town-q2>

On the rental side, American Community Survey data suggest rental units make up 25% of the town's occupied housing stock³, though the lack of a town rental registry makes it difficult to know unit characteristics, including asking rents, with precision. The most recent Census estimates put the gross rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Norwich at \$1,298 per month.⁴ However, the 2023 HUD fair market rent for Windsor County is just \$1,129.⁵ That means that a household with a housing choice voucher would struggle to afford an appropriate rental unit in Norwich, even if a vacant unit could be found, given the high proportion likely occupied by students of Dartmouth College.

The fact that the town is at present largely inaccessible to new residents with low or moderate incomes hurts employees of local businesses who want to live within a reasonable commuting distance of their employers (and in turn, hurts the businesses' ability to attract and retain employees). Norwich is located close to three major job centers. According to the most recently available data from the Census's County Business Patterns program⁶, three nearby towns – White River Junction (a village in the Town of Hartford), Hanover, NH, and Lebanon, NH – collectively have 33,975 employees (4,754; 12,593; and 16,628, respectively). This concentration exceeds the 24,514 employees in zip code 05401, which encompasses much of Burlington.

In addition to the proximity to jobs that residency in Norwich offers, its elementary school, and the middle school and high school in Hanover, NH that comprise the bi-state school district of which Norwich is a part, are consistently rated highly by education authorities, making Norwich appealing for families with children. In the 2022 assessment from the Vermont Agency of Education⁷, 89% of sixth graders at the Marion Cross School tested proficient or above in language arts, compared to the statewide average of 44%; 82% were proficient in math, compared to 30% statewide.

At present, the challenges of developing additional housing in town – including lack of wastewater infrastructure, high land values, and the limited reach of public water infrastructure – are pushing development to other towns. Twin Pines Housing Trust, the regional nonprofit developer that relies on the Low

3

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2021.S2502?q=S2502:+Demographic+Characteristics+for+Occupied+Housing+Units&g=860XX00US05055>

⁴ <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2021.B25031?q=Renter+Costs&g=860XX00US05055>

⁵ https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2023_code/2023summary.odn

6

[https://data.census.gov/table/CBP2021.CB2100CBP?q=CBP2021.CB2100CBP&t=Employment&g=040XX00US33\\$8610000,50\\$8610000](https://data.census.gov/table/CBP2021.CB2100CBP?q=CBP2021.CB2100CBP&t=Employment&g=040XX00US33$8610000,50$8610000)

⁷ <https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/vermont-education-dashboard/vermont-education-dashboard-assessment>

Income Housing Tax Credit and other programs administered by Vermont and New Hampshire, has active projects in Hartford, Hanover and Lebanon, but no prospects in Norwich.

2. Describe the manner in which the need was determined and how your project (proposal) will meet the need described in #1.
*Cite relevant data and attach any studies or information to support this need.

Norwich has a town housing strategy, developed with public engagement in 2019 by the Affordable Housing Subcommittee⁸ and ultimately included as an appendix by the Planning Commission in the 2020 town plan that was approved by the Selectboard.⁹ The housing strategy sets a task for the town to reduce barriers to the development of new housing, and one of the recommended mechanisms is to investigate the use of land owned or controlled by the town as a way to bring down development costs. This task is also included as task 4-3.c in the Housing Chapter of the Norwich Town Plan (2020).

With the facilitation of the then-Planning Director, the subcommittee undertook that investigation in 2021, leading to a report of notable parcels.¹⁰ Much of the property reviewed was located far from the village center, had deed restrictions limiting its use, was currently being utilized for another purpose, or had natural resources constraints that made it less suitable for the development of housing than the site chosen for this Planning Grant application.

The site selected as the subject of this planning grant represents the best available area of unused town-owned land. While not within the village center, it is in a close-in section of Norwich – closer to the center of town and regional job centers than other nearby homes valued at over \$1 million. While this parcel houses the town's transfer station and DPW facility on the southern half of the site (and a long-closed landfill at the very southern end), the proposed development sites are at the northwestern and northern edges of the property, a sizable distance from these facilities, in wooded areas that are outside the fall zone of a radio tower that is on the property. Developing the northwestern or northern edges of the property, in a wooded area from which one cannot see the transfer station or DPW facility, would help to mitigate environmental justice concerns. In addition, to the extent feasible, access options will be prioritized that minimize the need to drive by the transfer station or DPW facility.

⁸ http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Appendices_2019_12_09.pdf

⁹ http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Norwich_Plan_2020-ADOPTED-lr-.pdf

¹⁰ <http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2021-Review-of-Publicly-Owned-Land-by-Affordable-Housing-Subcommittee.pdf>

Should the planning activities undertaken with this planning grant determine that affordable housing is feasible, it will be important to assess the environmental safety of the site. This could potentially involve subdividing the parcel and partnering with a prospective purchaser for access to the state's Brownfields Reuse and Environmental Liability Limitation Program. Before this process can be considered and undertaken, however, a determination is needed of whether development is feasible and, if so, of what size and at what specific part of the property – evidence and recommendations that can be provided through the activities funded by this Planning Grant.

The requested Planning Grant will help the town determine the suitability of the site for the development of affordable housing, determine the physical, regulatory and financial constraints associated with the site, and develop a project plan that can be used to provide the framework needed to move forward with an environmental assessment and then the development of affordable housing, should the planning grant determine it to be feasible and the town determines the project's benefits outweigh its costs.

The Planning Grant will fund a project that entails both the services of technical experts and local volunteer contributions.

A qualified firm will create a LiDAR base map for the parcel using publicly available information from the Vermont Center for Geographic Information, and conduct a conceptual wetland evaluation in the immediate area of the project. The firm will conduct conceptual planning of the site, including development and access options, taking into consideration the planning and zoning requirements for subdivision in the town and other likely regulatory requirements (such as wetland classification and likely buffers, Act 250 threshold criteria, and other permits needed to implement the project). This work will include an examination of the feasibility of accessing the site via New Boston Road, either directly, or through an easement from a neighboring landowner, and if needed via Turnpike Road (again through an easement); among other issues, this will include an examination of topographical constraints (including slopes and the route of New Boston Brook) and financial feasibility.

Onsite work will include digging test pits in the likely development areas to evaluate soil conditions for potential on-site wastewater disposal; topographic surveying to facilitate access road design and unit layout design; and boundary surveying for the project area that would be removed from the town's parcel. An engineer will consider the amount of land needed for wells and a septic system, along with associated isolation distances.

At the recommendation of the State Historic Preservation Office, the project will include an Archeological Resources Assessment. (They recommended this rather

than a Phase 1 at this time.) The Assessment will include desktop research (land records, historical maps, aerial photos) and onsite examination to determine the historic use of the site, the presence of historic structures and Native American sites, and issues that may be relevant to historic structures on nearby parcels. The town will receive a map of any sensitive areas, a determination of the extent to which they can be avoided by the likely building envelope, and recommendations for the need for a subsequent Phase 1 archeology survey to assess a presumed site's significance.

The project will also include a market study to determine the most appropriate development concept for the site (e.g. rental vs. homeownership, number of units) based on demand, financial feasibility, and other factors. The market study will require a determination of the primary geographic area from which the project's residents will be generated, considering transportation systems, geographic constraints, comparable housing in the area, and social market patterns; an analysis of the market area with respect to the income of residents and their housing needs, with particular attention to income bands relevant for financing programs; a review of local and regional economic trends affecting the area residential market; and an assessment of comparable existing and planned housing offerings in the market area. The study will compare the projected development costs against potential revenue sources to determine the financial feasibility of any future development of affordable housing. Like the other studies, the market study will be conducted by a qualified and reputable firm whose work can be relied upon by future development partners for the site.

The Planning Grant will support two additional work streams to prepare the town to develop the site:

- **Outreach to low- and moderate-income community members –**
Members of the town's Affordable Housing Subcommittee will conduct interviews and moderate focus groups with residents of Norwich and surrounding towns. These individuals have lived experiences that should inform the choice of development options and other project requirements. Potential partners for these research and consultation efforts include Twin Pines Housing Trust, which manages the Starlake community, a permanently-affordable homeownership community in Norwich; Norwich Senior Housing, the town's only other dedicated affordable housing site; the Upper Valley Haven, which in addition to being the region's homeless shelter and service provider also connects local landlords with income-eligible tenants for the Vermont Housing Improvement Program; and other local organizations. Among the participants may be individuals who could be residents of future housing development at the site. The subcommittee will supplement this targeted outreach with general information sessions for Norwich residents to update them on the status of the Planning Grant and obtain feedback on

recommendations developed by the project, as well as with briefings with housing developers to identify concerns or priorities that the final Planning Grant work should address.

- **Legal services and additional surveying work for subdividing the parcel**
 - Should the Planning Grant determine that affordable housing is feasible on the site, a qualified firm, in partnership with the town’s counsel, will conduct the necessarily preparatory work that would be needed to separate the part of the parcel most suited to housing from the part the town would likely retain, including the transfer station and surrounding operations. This preparatory work will entail a subdivision plat for local review (by the Development Review Board) and guidance to the Selectboard and town manager for advancing the development of the site. (The actual subdivision of the property, should it occur, would take place after the conclusion of this planning grant process, should a decision be made to proceed based on the information developed through the planning activities funded by the planning grant.)

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission will provide the overall program administration for the Planning Grant, including procurement for services over \$10,000, financial management, and reporting.

3. *a. Describe why this is the best approach to meet this need.*
b. Identify other approaches that were considered and explain why they were not pursued.

**Clearly indicate all other alternatives that were explored and investigated as alternatives. Summarize the options and outcomes of your investigation.*

Ultimately, the town and region need multiple affordable housing options. To our knowledge, this parcel represents the best possibility for developing affordable housing on an unused area of town-owned land. Given the other constraints on affordable housing development noted above, this represents the best available option for meeting our need.

In parallel to preparing this Planning Grant application, the Affordable Housing Subcommittee has pursued other recommendations of the town housing strategy. Notably, the subcommittee has conducted educational events, in partnership with the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust and other local experts, to encourage homeowners to explore creating Accessory Dwelling Units; and it has begun an effort to build awareness within and a coalition among the town’s faith communities, in the hopes of generating public support and potentially the donation of privately-owned land for affordable housing development.

The subcommittee also continues to investigate the other promising parcel of land identified in the recent study, one owned by the fire district, but to which

the town controls the development rights. Both municipal entities have indicated that discussion of this parcel's future disposition, and an assessment of its feasibility for housing, is contingent on broader and more long-term negotiations on other issues. The topic of this Planning Grant application was determined to be the best case for concrete and meaningful action on town-owned property not otherwise committed to other uses to address the widely understood local and regional needs for affordable housing.

To be clear, the affordable housing supply shortage in Norwich and the broader region is so severe that multiple projects will be needed. This project will make an important contribution to addressing this need.

All appropriate funding sources have been sought.

4. *Describe the effort to obtain other funding and, why particular funding sources were considered but not pursued.*

**Cite all other sources that have been pursued. Be sure to include any other applications that were made to other funding sources. If they were not funded, please indicate reasons and explain why other funding is not applicable to this application.*

The VCDP Planning Grant is the most appropriate source of funding for the initial evaluation of the site. Other grant programs considered include those offered by USDA-Rural Development¹¹ and the Northern Border Regional Commission¹² generally are applicable to projects that have an identified development partner or that are located in low-income municipalities.

5. Explain the level of municipal government support.
**If the town is not providing any financial support for the project or any Cash-in-Kind services, please explain why.*

The town's contribution at this stage will consist of in-kind services from the town manager, who will act as the Contact Person, as well as at least 150 hours of volunteer time from the Affordable Housing Subcommittee (valued at \$30 per hour per estimates from Independent Sector¹³), whose members will plan and moderate the community input described in the Project Need section.

In the event the products of the Planning Grant suggest that the site may be viable for the development of affordable housing, there may be other ways for the town to contribute to the eventual project, including by making the land available at a below-market price (or at no cost) and by making available to a

¹¹ <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/vt-nh>

¹² <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/program-areas>

¹³ <https://independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Value-of-Volunteer-Time-by-State-2001-2022.pdf>

development partner the town's \$45,000 Affordable Housing Reserve Fund, re-established by the approval of 80% of voters in November 2018.¹⁴ A determination of how the town can best support an eventual project will be made at a future date, based on a review of learning from the studies funded through this planning grant.

How well the project meets a Consolidated Plan goal.

6. *Describe how your project meets the goals of the Consolidated Plan and identify the strategies that will be employed to meet those goals.*

The Planning Grant will fund activities that prepare the town to respond to several of the priorities in Vermont's 2020-24 Consolidated Plan and 2023 Annual Action Plan.¹⁵ The highest priority need is "Safe, Decent, and Affordable Housing," to be achieved by "increasing the supply of decent affordable housing." And the third priority, economic opportunity, touches on both the role of affordable housing in a high-opportunity town like Norwich on the lives of low- and moderate-income residents in addition to the benefits to local employers' ability to attract and retain staff. The 2023 action plan notes that in the previous year the state allocated CDBG funds to several planning grants, making clear that the criteria incorporate the impacts of the project on future development.

Is the project consistent with the local Municipal Plan?

7. *Provide a letter from the Municipality that tells us how this project is consistent with the Municipal Plan.*
**the certification should come from a person at the municipality who has a right to act on behalf of the municipality. This could be a municipal official or chair of the planning commission.*

To be provided by the Town manager or the Chair of the Planning Commission

Is the project consistent with the regional plan?

8. *Upload a certification from the Regional Planning Commission that the project is consistent with the Regional Plan. Provide clarification if needed.*
**the certification should come from a person at the Regional Planning Commission.*

To be provided by Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

¹⁴ <http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-General-Election-and-Ballot-Article-Results.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/plans-data-rules/hud>

9. a. *If this project is being carried out on behalf of the municipalities within your county or region, the application must include documentation of regional support.*
b. *Is this project on the Regional Development Corporation Priority List?*
**Check in with your Regional Development Corporation on how to get on their list.*

Not applicable

Degree of health/safety risks to beneficiaries

10. *Describe how this project, if it were to be implemented, would directly addresses a health or safety issue for the intended beneficiaries.*
**Health and safety issues include potable water supplies, eradicating homelessness and poverty, lead paint abatement, handicap accessibility, crime prevention, providing increased health and wellness services, etc. If you are unsure how to answer this question, please contact your CD Specialist.*

The Planning Grant itself qualifies for the “Exempt” level of environmental review.¹⁶ In addition to providing program administration, the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission has performed this review, using funding separate from the Planning Grant. (Need to ask Nate Cleveland for process of creating environmental review in GEARS.)

The 24+/- acre parcel is taller than it is wide. At the southern end of the parcel, there was formerly a town landfill. That landfill is now closed, and there is a transfer station and a town garage just north of the historic landfill site. The areas most likely to be suitable for development are on the northwestern and northern edges of the parcel, far from the historic landfill, the transfer station and the town garage, as well as outside of the fall zone from a communications tower located on the property. A phase 1 environmental assessment has not yet been performed on the site. Should findings from the Planning Grant determine that a project is feasible, and the town decides to move the project to the next stage, such an assessment would be a logical next step.

The site planning work funded by this grant will also inform discussions with abutters, if needed to secure access to the site via easements that allow for driveway construction. Access will also be planned in consideration of minimizing potential traffic impacts of new residents.

Timing Pressures

11. *Please describe, if applicable, any particular issues that make this project time sensitive.*

¹⁶ https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/VCDP/ER/CD-VCDP-ER-LevelsOfReview.pdf

**Please address if you have closing dates, contract with time limits, other funding that is dependent on CDBG funds, cost estimates with expiration dates, or other factors that may apply.*

None

Project Impact

Level of beneficiary involvement in the development of the project, as appropriate

12. Describe how persons of low- and moderate- income were involved in the development of this project. How have they shown support?

** Describe any planning meetings, resident meetings, or surveys that have been done. Describe what methods of communication were used to communicate the goals of the project and how you collected input from persons of low and moderate incomes.*

This Planning Grant application was developed by the town's Affordable Housing Subcommittee, in consultation with the Planning Commission, the Selectboard, the Town Manager and the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. As described in the Project Need section, the grant will in part fund outreach to low- and moderate-income residents in the region regarding potential future housing development. The subcommittee views this as an integral component of the project, and subcommittee members have experience soliciting this kind of public input from the process of developing the town's housing strategy.

How well the project indirectly impacts the community and/or additional LMI people.

13. Describe the indirect impact to the community, if it were to be implemented and other LMI beneficiaries that may be indirectly served by the project.

**A housing rehab project may preserve housing for 10 existing residents (Direct Benefit) of the facility but may positively impact the community (Indirect Benefit) by retaining affordable housing in an area that has very little. The indirect benefit could also be related to neighbors and adjacent properties, future employees, generations, etc.*

Any future development at the site would directly benefit LMI households who secure access to affordable housing through this development. In addition, the development would add to the town's tax rolls. To the extent that future residents include families with children, it could reduce residents' annual education taxes by reducing per-pupil spending. The development of affordable housing at the site could also reduce commuting distances for employees of area businesses, in turn reducing costs that fall disproportionately on low-wage earners as well as climate impacts of car travel.

Project Feasibility

Readiness to start within three months of the award.

14. *Please specifically identify the level of access to any land or buildings that will be required in order to complete your project as proposed; please explain when and how you expect to obtain such access.*

**If the planning activities are site specific, adequate access to the site during the life of the planning grant is crucial. If the entity undertaking the planning activities does not own the site a letter from the property owner must be obtained. The letter should: a) demonstrates support for the study's scope of work, b) allows access for whatever work must be done on the property for the study, c) ensures that the property is available during the timeframe needed to complete the study so the project, if found feasible, can move to implementation, and d) provides a willingness to sell the land at the appraised value.*

The town owns the site and has agreed to allow access pertinent to this Planning Grant. There are no obstacles to work starting within three months of award.

15. *Please identify the status of commitments from each of the other funding sources; please explain when commitments are expected from each funding source.*

None

Benefit/Timeframe Feasibility

16. *There must be a reasonable expectation for achieving benefits for persons of low- and moderate income in the plan(s) developed with the use of CDBG funds were to be implemented. Explain what the anticipated benefits(s) would be and how this was determined.*

The goal of this Planning Grant is to assess the feasibility of housing that rents or sells at below-market levels and remains affordable in perpetuity; we anticipate that at least half of the units will be permanently affordable to families at or below 80% of the area median income. This will ensure that the project meets or exceeds the requirements for the LMI national objective and meets a vital local and regional need. A more precise determination of the income levels that can feasibly be served by the site will need to await the outcome of the studies funded by this Planning Grant, including an assessment of the projected costs of the project and the subsidies, if any, that may be available. Workforce housing in Norwich, and Windsor County generally, corresponds to a level of income at which households typically own cars. Because the site is not located on a current Advance Transit bus line, an eventual housing development would most likely target that income level. If needed for the project's overall financial feasibility, a small number of units could be sold or rented at or just below market rates, in a mixed-income model, consistent with the LMI national objective.

17. Timetable:

- a. Provide a project timeline. Include dates the Environmental Release, permits in hand, 100% funding commitments, design completion, construction completion, etc. as well as for procurement steps including hiring, execution of contracts achieving Benefit, and any other key dates for actions to carry out this project.
 - b. How was this timetable determined?
18. If the applicant community has an open PG, please explain its capacity to administer an additional PG and describe the timeline to complete the open PG.

Cost estimates are reasonably supported

19. *Submit back-up documentation to support the cost shown on the Budget Forms. If supporting documentation was uploaded to the budget forms, please note this in the text box and select N/A.*

Cost estimates provided by firms with extensive VCDP Planning Grant experience.

20. *Despite best efforts and built in contingencies, please explain how cost overruns will be covered?*
**It is not enough to say that the estimates for your project are firm. Please discuss your capacity for gap financing or the availability of operating reserves.*

Cost overruns with the site investigation components of the project would jeopardize funding available for later site planning and legal work. However, if needed to cover cost overruns, the town could consider tapping its \$45,000 Affordable Housing Reserve Fund. Another option is to increase the in-kind contributions provided by members of the affordable housing subcommittee, which includes several individuals with relevant housing experience.

Resolution for Grant Application

A VCDP grant must go to a municipality or municipalities. Even if an organization or agency sponsors the project and prepares the application, final authority and responsibility rests with the municipality(ies). To be certain that the legislative body understands the obligations it will assume if the application is successful, the appropriate Resolution for VCDP Grant Application Authority must be adopted by the municipality(ies), signed by the legislative body(ies) and the original(s) are uploaded to the grant application.

To be issued by the Selectboard following public hearing (below)

Public Hearing

The municipality's legislative body must hold at least one public hearing, in an ADA accessible location, to provide residents with an opportunity to learn about the proposal and an opportunity to comment. The Federal Act requires that the development of projects carried out

in whole or in part with CDBG funds, must involve citizen participation, especially low- and moderate-income citizen participation.

To be scheduled in coordination with Selectboard and Planning Commission

Certification of Program Income/Unrestricted Revenue Available

Applicants that have received income from previous VCDP and/or HUD grants must include a history of such receipts for the previous three years, the current balance of such funds and what is anticipated to be received during the course of the proposed program. Describe how the funds are being used and indicate whether the funds are being committed to the proposed activities.

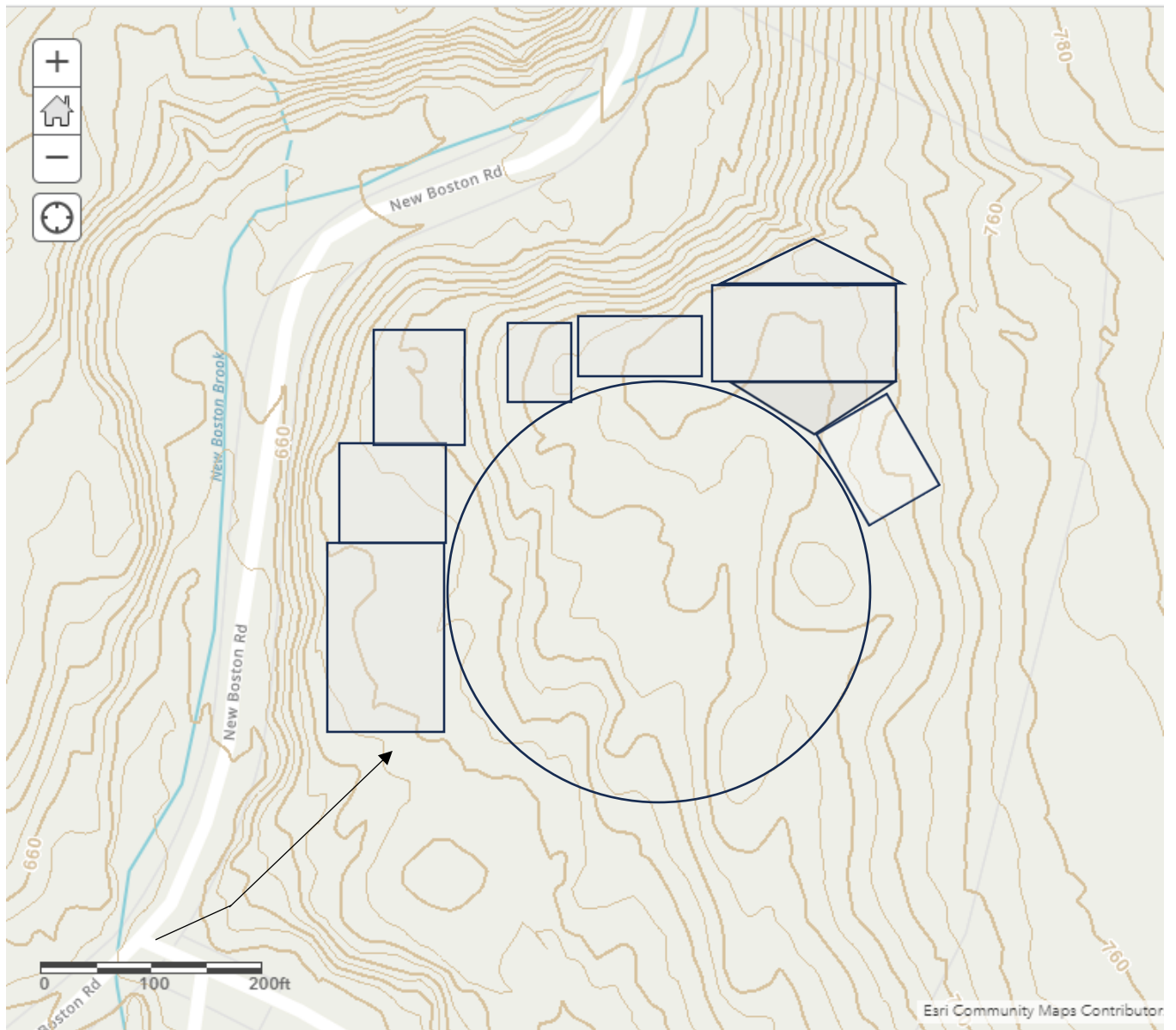
Town to provide certification

Option Agreement/Other Evidence of Site Control

If the planning activities are site specific, adequate access to the site during the life of the planning grant is crucial. If the entity undertaking the planning activities does not own the site a letter from the property owner must be obtained. The letter should: a) demonstrates support for the study's scope of work, b) allows access for whatever work must be done on the property for the study, c) ensures that the property is available during the timeframe needed to complete the study so the project, if found feasible, can move to implementation, and d) provides a willingness to sell the land at the appraised value.

No letter required because the town owns the site

Northern Portion of the Town-owned parcel on New Boston Road



Circle = approximate area of no-fall zone around the communications tower.

Arrow = approximate path of access from New Boston Road

Rectangles and triangles represent potential sites for development.

Note: All shapes, including the circle, were drawn manually to illustrate the approximate building envelope and should be confirmed at a future date.

The Planning Commission is a 7-member volunteer group appointed by the Selectboard and responsible for creating the town plan and regulations that guide development in town. The town plan is the overall guide which reflects the town's vision for development, energy, land use, transportation, etc. It describes what we want our town to look like and outlines specific goals to get us there. Norwich's town plan was last updated in 2020. The Planning Commission also creates zoning bylaws & subdivision regulations which are used by the Development Review Board and our zoning staff to review permit applications and development proposals. We draft these documents for Selectboard review and approval.

Our work requires incorporating the desires of Norwich residents into our planning documents, so resident involvement is essential. Early this year we reached out to various town groups to help prioritize upcoming Commission work. We have begun detailed conversations with these groups. The Selectboard, our town's legislative body, will be involved in this conversation.

To focus our work and give opportunities for resident participation, we set up several subcommittees:

Affordable Housing – This long-standing group is currently working on a planning grant for a possible project on New Boston Rd.

Solar siting - A recent solar siting case brought up topics needing town wide discussion. This subcommittee will facilitate this discussion and propose any necessary changes in our plan and regs.

Land use – addresses the overall question: what types of development should happen where?

Multi-modal transport – Newly formed group to address topics of pedestrian safety, Rt 5 bike corridor, trails, etc.

Our planning and zoning work in Norwich has been constrained by an unfilled planning staff position. Filling this position is a top priority. Also on the staff front, we commend the excellent work of Pam Mullen, our long time P&Z Assistant, for holding things together in the office and Kyle Katz, on loan from our regional commission as interim Zoning Administrator, who has kept permits moving forward and supports the DRB.

The Planning Commission's work makes extensive use of background references, maps, and other documents. For collaborative work we all need access to the same information. To this end we intend to make greater use of the town website. Please explore the P&Z pages and let us know your thoughts.

We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30. All PC and subcommittee meetings are warned with minutes published. The public is encouraged to participate.

Norwich PC Minutes -10/10/23

Members Present: Ernie Ciccotelli, Vince Crow, Jeff Goodrich, Stuart Richards, Jaan Laaspere, Bob Pape, Kris Clement

Public: Elissa Close

Meeting Opened: 6:34 pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Goodrich moved, seconded by Ciccotelli, to approve the agenda.

Motion passed via consensus

2. Public Comment on items not on the agenda

N/A

3. Correspondence

Laaspere stated that VTrans is conducting a survey of towns along a proposed bicycle corridor on Route 5 in order to gauge interest and potential involvement in the project.

The group had consensus that this would be positive for Norwich and the surrounding communities, and that there are potential grants to fund the projects.

Goodrich volunteered to reach out to VTrans to determine the next step.

Elissa Close read from a letter to the Land Use subcommittee (see attached) stating the importance of considering the impact of development on nature and limit development.

4. Chair Report

Laaspere stated that the AHSC is aiming for the January deadline for the New Boston Rd planning grant.

The group had consensus to establish a Bike/ Pedestrian subcommittee in regards to the previously discussed bicycle corridor and long range planning for the town. Goodrich and Crow volunteered to join the subcommittee and were empowered by the PC to reach out to Paul Manganiello and Peter Orner with an invitation to join the subcommittee.

5.Planning Commission role, staff and process

The group discussed how to organize documents and correspondence so that it can be easily referenced. Laaspere will investigate the best method to publish the files online

Richards moved, seconded by Goodrich, the PC will use the following guidelines regarding correspondence.

- All opinions and information is welcome
- The documents must be relevant to the PC actions
- Use links to external documents when possible
- State a clear identity of the submitter and context of the material

Motion passed 6-0

The group discussed the vacant Planning and Zoning staff. The group had consensus that applicant should be willing to learn, open minded, is asset to the PC and can interpret and make decisions based on the LUR while being an advocate for the applicant, the town, and the DRB. Also that the PC is a at the forefront of finding a candidate and directing them

11. Adjourn

Richards moved, seconded by Goodrich, to adjourn the meeting at 8:44PM

Motion passed 7-0

Future Meeting

PC Meeting – 11/7/23 at 6:30pm at Tracy Hall (also accessible via Zoom)

Minutes by Vincent Crow on 10/12/23

Recent PC debate centering on what to name (or not) current changes in climate serves little purpose. We are entrenched in our 'camps' and can point to evidence in support of our point of view from any of a zillion sources, within or outside web-world. This information is unlikely to sway any of us from our tightly held viewpoints. While we dither, our expanding human impact on Nature continues to reduce wild places that once supported a diversity of creatures, insects, amphibians and birds, while diminishing quality of life for the humans, too. We should, instead, focus on limiting human development and its offsite impacts on Nature and each other. There are, in fact, others – many of them non-human – who are seeking homes, futures, health and life, who require space and healthy, diverse habitat in which to survive, just like humans.

An opinion regarding climate change/ crisis/ emergency isn't required to see that human development of land invariably leads to further development and offsite impacts that alter livability of a place for humans, but impacts non-human communities even more dramatically. Fewer wild places, green spaces, open meadows. The more subtle sounds of nature, overwhelmed by sounds of expanding human intrusion into areas once quiet and diverse with many types of living things. Dark nights give way to increasing lumens that blot out stars and force creatures into ever smaller, more compromised corners of the landscape or extinguish them entirely. Nature's wonderful diversity, upon which all humans depend, is reduced to a homogeneous drone of noise, light, cement and asphalt. In the long run, Nature will survive without us. We cannot survive without Nature. Technology will never build us an ecosystem of the diversity and beauty Nature has developed over millennia. Yet we do remarkably little to protect that which gives us life as we push for "progress" only in terms defined by and pertaining to humans.

Only my eyes and ears are required to convince me that human development proceeds at the expense of Nature: Creatures, small as bacteria and fungi, trees bigger than my house, and all the birds, amphibians, mammals and fish in between are impacted by diminishing habitat insufficient in size to sustain them. Fewer than a dozen monarch butterflies this summer, about the same numbers of fire flies this spring, in my back yard. This, the same location that hosted more than twice that number when I grew up here over 60 years ago. Lack of habitat, pesticides, invasives, light pollution are among the factors that impact these insects. All due to human presence. A beneficent touch or a toxic imprint on Nature? It matters how we treat the world in which we live.

There's money to be made from development – particularly in Vermont. No shortage of human voices add to the lobbying, negotiating, and legislating of development issues. Is it REALLY progress? At what cost, particularly to those who can't vote, or donate, write opinion letters, or come to meetings? Trees and soil bacteria won't be showing up at planning meetings. Forests, lakes, the air around us, each critically important to our health on this planet, yet...no voice, and worse no name. We just refer to these, collectively as "resources," and proceed to dig them up, pave them over, together with all their interconnected micro and macro level systems. Degrading them until they are gone. Hence my attempt to advocate for these critically important systems and the non-human individuals that are part of them.

Many of us in Vermont or other places with a bit of Nature still nearby, are here for the value it adds to our daily lives. When Nature has been extinguished in our once nurturing environment, we are pushed out to seek the next place that may bring us peace, beauty, and solace. In so doing we spread the 'cancer' of human development further across the natural world. We must strengthen protection for that which strengthens and protects us: Nature. That will mean, must mean, addressing offsite impacts and development. Unless we craft planning and zoning regulations that protect Nature, she won't be able to protect herself. We've proven too often that humans have difficulty limiting consumption. Wendell Berry observes that "control" is a favorite word of our industrial economy (traffic control, self-control, control of development, etc) yet we repeatedly set out to control that which we refuse to limit. "If we will not limit causes, there can be no controlling of effects. What is to be the fate of self-control in an economy that encourages unlimited selfishness?"

Climate change or not, I can see and hear uncomfortable changes around me that influence the livability of my home and surely that of the creatures sharing this place, too. Lacking clear and enforceable controls, our current trajectory leads to further destruction of Nature's marvelous diversity and leaves us with just another landscape like so many others in America: A homogeneity of human development, always at the expense of more wildness and places of solitude where the subtle sounds of nature can still be heard. We need wild places, Natural areas where we can appreciate other-than-human presence. Quiet reflection, to contemplate something bigger than ourselves, Nature or the stars, is not just idle fancy. Study after study shows its critical importance to our health. Those who push back will be called NIMBY, or worse. I suggest we look hard at who's really being selfish. I would suggest that we/ humans, collectively, have been extremely selfish at the expense of Nature for millennia. Crazy, since for all our technology we are unable to recreate the magic, beauty, and diversity of this web of systems on which we depend for our lives. Shame on us: today's youth are rightly incensed at our hubris.

Human pressure to develop Vermont, or any other place where there is a bit of desirable space upon which to build, will not stop. Likely will get far worse as increasing numbers of people around the globe become migrants for various reasons. Bulldozing and paving over what remains of our diverse natural world will not solve this issue – induced and perpetuated by humans. It will likely become worse if we continually favor human development over protection of Nature.

Having visited places where human development co-exists with Nature, I know it can be done, but it takes careful crafting of planning and development regulations that value and protect Nature as well as humans. Regulations that can be enforced; and the will to enforce them. Off-site impacts of any development play a significant role in manner and to what degree we impact Nature and one another. Limited development within guidelines suited to the location would be less problematic if we could live more quietly, with far less lumens at night, - just to give 2 examples of impacts that regularly set my teeth on edge and both of which have negative implications for Nature.

No discussion of "climate change" vs "emergency" is required and likely just slows progress toward workable solutions. Identification of enforceable, effective methods of helping those with insufficient courtesy genes to behave as if there was someone else living nearby-- both human and non-human 'someones,' would be a start. It will take creativity plus rules and regulations because humans have proven we can't do this without the help of such controls. But lacking this, I see no benefit in more development that would just sustain the model of "economic progress:" bringing in more business, creating more jobs, building more workforce housing, demand for more services, and so more houses, roads, malls, etc, with all the offsite impacts that accompany development. It is a dead end; an endless loop of consumption, extraction and destruction of Nature. Noise and lighting ordinances may seem onerous, but those places that protect such characteristics offer their human residents more than just houses. These are *homes* in communities with the individuality of a *particular* place; small and diverse enough to be loved and appreciated as different from 'Anywhere USA'. These places with varied characteristics where Nature's ecosystems and non-human residents have as much value as their human neighbors, are to be defended in strongest terms by those fortunate enough to live there.

We need planning and zoning documents that support and protect ALL of our community, non-human and human, and the ecosystems of which we are all a part.

Elissa Close
Partridge Hill

[to Planning Commission 9/28/23]

Norwich PC Special Meeting Minutes -9/19/23

Members Present: Vince Crow, Jaan Laaspere, Bob Pape, Kris Clement

Public: Kathleen Shepard, Bob Gere, Linda Gray, Mary Albert

Meeting Opened: 6:03 pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Clement Moved, seconded by Pape, to approve the agenda

Motion passes 4-0

2. Review 249 Bragg Hill Rd Hennessey net-metering PV application.

Laaspere summarized that the meeting is regarding a net-metering application for a 50 kW solar array on the Hennessey property on Bragg Hill road.

He also stated that this project appears to qualify as a Category 2 net-metering system which means ground mounted, more than 15kw, less than 150kW and sited on a preferred site.

The preferred site designation comes from the PUC regulations [5.100] and has nothing to do with the town plan or the Planning Commission's discretion. One criteria for preferred site designation is to have at least 50% of the system's electrical output used by the landowner or an adjoining landowner. This application states that 100% of the electricity will be used on site.

He continued stating that the Planning Commission can intervene and ask for party status, which would give the PC the right to appeal the PUC decision and be notified of all activity. However, there would need to be substantive issues to justify an appeal.

The group had consensus that the application straightforward and accurate, and did not require any action by the PC at this time.

3. Adjourn

Draft Minutes by Vince Crow on 9/21/23

Norwich PC Minutes -9/12/23

Members Present: Ernie Ciccotelli, Vince Crow, Jeff Goodrich, Stuart Richards, Jaan Laaspere, Bob Pape, Kris Clement

Public: Lisa Close

Meeting Opened: 6:46 pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Goodrich moved, seconded by Ciccotelli, to approve the agenda.

Motion passed 7-0

2. Public Comment on items not on the agenda

Lisa Close stated that she is interested in establishing regulations that focus on nature and its inhabitants regarding development, focusing on preserving what we have.

3. Correspondence

Consensus was met to hold a special meeting regarding the proposed solar project at 249 Bragg Hill Rd on 9/19/23 at 6 pm. This will allow public input on the proposed solar project.

4. Chair Report

Laaspere stated that moving forward the PC should focus on the task at hand and with regard to the power of the PC.

5. Subcommittee updates

a. Solar Siting Committee

Clement stated that focus of the Solar Siting Committee is to keep up to date with evolving laws and regulations and how that affects the town plan and land use regulations.

Goodrich encouraged the subcommittee to add members outside of the PC to utilize members of the public with skills and knowledge of the subject.

Laaspere stated that the group had planned to add more members but as it became less formal as an advisory committee as there is no voting involved.

Ciccotelli stated that this subcommittee is about collecting ideas and bringing them to the PC.

Laaspere stated that adding additional members could still happen in the future and reiterated that the goal is to maximize public input.

b. Land Use

Richards stated that the main focus at this point is determining the process to make the appropriate changes to the town plan and the land use regulations.

Pape stated that he is in the process of creating an editable version of the town plan that the group can use to make proposed edits.

Laaspere stated the group need to focus on specific parts of the town plan and be focus on the work in those areas.

Goodrich encouraged reaching out to other group throughout the Upper Valley for their input and embrace the broader community.

Laaspere stated that the subcommittees need to define and create a boundary around their first stage of work.

6. Planning & Zoning files

Laaspere explained that screenshots of folders of the available planning and zoning files were included in the packet and solicited requests for specific files based on that information.

Goodrich requested a copy of the original town plan with graphics and maps as well as the recent Land Use Regulation updates.

7. Planning Commission staff

Consensus was met to encourage members of the PC to attend the next SB meeting on 9/27 to discuss the chair's memo regarding the open staff position, specifically Job Title, Job Description, and hiring process.

8. Planning Commission work plan

Laaspere stated that is receiving positive feedback after reaching out to the DRB, Conservation Commission, Energy Committee and Listers for input in the work of the PC. He also encouraged members of the PC to attend an upcoming meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission on 9/28 at the request of the HPC Chair.

9. Approve minutes

Pape moved, seconded by Clement, to approve August 8 & August 22, 2023 minutes

Motion 6-0 (Goodrich abstained in absentia)

10. Public Comment

N/A

11. Adjourn

Crow moved, seconded by Pape, to adjourn the meeting at 8:42PM

Motion passed 6-0 (Goodrich abstained in absentia)

Future Meetings:

Special Meeting - 249 Bragg Hill Rd Solar Project – 9/19/23 at 6pm via Zoom

PC Meeting – 10/10/23 at 6:30pm at Tracy Hall (also accessible via Zoom)

Minutes by Vincent Crow on 9/14/23