

Norwich Planning Commission meeting 4 /9/24

Members present Kris Clement, Ernie Ciccotelli, Jeff Goodrich, Mary Gorman, Jaan Laaspere, Bob Pape

Meeting began 6:35 PM

1) Approve Agenda

Ciccotelli moved, seconded by Gorman. Motion Passed 4-0 [Note: Goodrich and Pape joined meeting after approval of agenda]]

2) Public Comment for items not on agenda

No comments

3) Correspondence

The letter from Chris Katucki regarding solar siting is included in packet. It had been discussed by Solar Siting Subcommittee and is included part of the Subcommittee Updates discussion

4) Chair Updates

a. Connecticut river hydro re-licensing comments

- i. Proposed comments by CT River Joint committee to be taken up by selectboard 4/ 10/24. Ciccotelli has added comments on Mitigation Expenses Fund (MEF) and recreational uses to the template to ensure existence of fund and accountability for damage At this point further action will be taken by selectboard – the PC has no further comments.

b. Planning & zoning staff

A new round of applications for the open Planning Director/Zoning Administrator position has been received, but no applications will be pursued at this time.

Goodrich emphasized the need for regulatory knowledge in the position, but not necessarily extensive experience.

Laaspere will encourage Town Manager to consider filling the ZA portion of the role alone

c. Open Meeting Law reminder

Laaspere reminded the PC that all town business must be done in warned meetings and the PC should inform members of the subcommittees of OML rules.

The group acknowledged there was an OML violation in a recent email exchange and will do its best avoid a repeat

5) Capital Planning

Laaspere discussed the state statutes regarding the responsibility of Planning Commissions around capital planning and queried the group regarding interest and thoughts on the subject.

24 VSA 4430 [and related] describe the expectations and requirements around a Capital Budget and Plan.

Goodrich emphasized the PCs responsibility under the law to do such Capital Planning work. Laaspere expressed interest in forming a Capital Planning subcommittee to work on both the 5 year plan required by state statutes and to provide input for upcoming town budget discussions. The PC discussed first steps of the proposed subcommittee regarding goal setting, public engagement and involvement of the Selectboard.

Motion made by Goodrich to create a Capital Planning Subcommittee which absorbs the Multi Modal Subcommittee, seconded by Ciccotelli.

Motion passed 6-0

Laaspere and Pape expressed interest in being included in the subcommittee.

6) Subcommittee Updates

a. Subcommittee membership and process

The proposed **Norwich Planning Commission Statement on Subcommittees** was discussed [attached below with edits]

Motion made by Goodrich to adopt the **Norwich Planning Commission Statement on Subcommittees**, seconded by Goodrich

Motion passed 6-0

b. Multi Modal Transportation

Goodrich said the draft charter for the group will be sent to the PC

c. Solar Siting

Clement said work has coalesced around 3 main points related to the town plan: update to be current with new state regulations, remove default preferred siting language, add sufficient specificity and guidance to the plan to not rely on zoning bylaws or maps

Goodrich requested that the wording for the proposed changes to the town plan be made in subcommittee and presented to the PC.

Motion made by Gorman to add agenda item to next meeting to review the granting of Preferred Siting to Lamperti

Vote: Yes- Clement, Ciccotelli, Gorman; No- Goodrich, Laaspere, Pape

Motion did not pass

Goodrich motioned to add Gorman to Solar Siting subcommittee, seconded by Clement

Approved unanimously

7) Permitting requirements for lot consolidation

No updates

8) Approve minutes March 12, 2024 and March 19, 2024

a. Goodrich motioned to approve minutes of March 12, 2024, seconded by Pape

Motion approved unanimously

b. Goodrich motioned to approve minutes of March 19, 2024, seconded by Pape

Motion approved unanimously

9) Public comment

(none)

10) Goodrich motioned to adjourn, seconded by Pape

Approved unanimously

Adjourn 8:35

Minutes prepared by Bob Pape

Norwich Planning Commission Statement on Subcommittees

In performing its work, the Norwich Planning Commission wishes to strike a reasonable balance between encouraging public participation and providing for orderly and consistent conduct of the town's business.

Topical subcommittees have a long and successful history of being used to incorporate a wide range of opinions from many interested town residents.

During recent Selectboard conversations, some Selectboard members have argued that more control over such groups is needed, including requiring all members of any group working on any aspect of the town's business to be officially appointed by the Selectboard.

Not even considering the time commitment that would be required by the SB to review every applicant, this change would be harmful to public participation and is unnecessary by statute. The message sent to community members would be clear: you need permission to volunteer your time. This would discourage participation of residents in town affairs and insult the many residents who devote huge amounts of time to volunteer activities associated with subcommittees of the Planning Commission and other town groups.

This level of centralized control is also unnecessary given that Planning Commission subcommittees operate under the following guidelines. Most importantly, these are advisory groups without independent authority to make decisions. They are informal extensions of the PC to help widen our capability and engage town-wide participation. Any specific ideas and proposals are brought back to the full Planning Commission for a vote and official decision.

Norwich Planning Commission Subcommittee Policy

A group can be chartered by the PC as a standing or ad-hoc subcommittee

devoted to a specific task or topic.

They shall:

- Create a charter statement to be approved by the PC describing the group's focus area and overall goals.
- Include at least one member of the Planning Commission, with a target membership of at least 5 resident members.
- Adhere strictly to all OML regulations for posting of meeting agendas, minutes, etc.
- Regularly update the PC on their activities and initiatives

The PC reserves the right to dissolve a subcommittee when it is no longer needed or to incorporate the work back into the full PC. We will maintain a list of active subcommittees on the PC page of the town website.

These subcommittees advise the Planning Commission on their respective topics. The PC maintains the decision-making authority over any proposals. A PC subcommittee cannot act as an independent entity representing the Town of Norwich