

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 11, 2005

Tracy Hall - Conference Room

Members Present: Daniel Johnson (Chair), Adele Fulton, Ralph Hybels, Lynn McGrew, Alison McRee (leaving at 10:10), Jeffrey Mathias, Jaye Pershing Johnson, Stuart Richards

Members Absent: Douglas Hoffman

Staff: Phil Dechert

The regular meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:39 p.m.

1. Approve Agenda

The agenda was amended to change the order of items 4 and 5 and move the Expansion of the VR District to the first item under Zoning Regulation Revisions. Also to add an update of the Chair's review report to Old Business and a discussion of using e-mail to New Business.

Procedure: The Chair asked for and received unanimous consent to approve agenda as amended.

2. Comments from the Public - none

3. Announcements & Correspondence - D. Johnson apologized for his delay in getting to the last meeting and thanked L. McGrew for serving as Chair pro tem. D. Johnson also thanked the volunteer scribes for their efforts. P. Dechert distributed a copy of an article on pedestrian projects.

5. Survey - Review Draft 3, cover letter, and budget

Changes to Draft 3 follow and will be incorporated as Draft 4.

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 2D, strike and replace "Born" with "Raised".

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 3, strike and replace "do you live in" with "is your primary property interest in" and strike "and select only one".

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 4, switch the order of answers D and E.

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 8, add "In each column check only one" and strike the two occurrences of "(Check one)".

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 11, add "(Check all that apply)" and reformat so that lines are easier to distinguish.

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 12, rewrite the question as "In the left column indicate what you would like to have in the town in general. In the right column, indicate what you would like to be able to walk to or have in your neighborhood."

Action: Unanimous consent to have # 13 entirely on the same page.

Action: Motion by D. Johnson to amend # 13 by adding "parts of" before "Norwich" in

question, and adding “Norwich owned” before “municipal” in answer A, and adding “Only” before “privately” in answer B, and adding “Hook up with a municipal treatment facility in neighboring towns of Hartford or Hanover.” as answer C.

Second J. Johnson. Passed 5-3-0 (For: D. Johnson, A. Fulton, R. Hybels, J. Mathias, J. Johnson; Against: L. McGrew, A. McRee, S. Richards).

Action: Motion by R. Hybels to replace # 14 with “14. To what extent do you support the development of affordable housing in Norwich?” and answers A Not at all, B Somewhat, and C A lot. Second A. Fulton. Failed 4-4-0 (For: D. Johnson, A. Fulton, R. Hybels, J. Johnson; Against: L. McGrew, A. McRee, J. Mathias, S. Richards).

Action: Motion by J. Mathias to replace the answers in # 14 with A: None, B: 1 - 20 units, C: 21 - 40 units, D: 41 - 60 units, E: 61 or more units. Second S. Richards. A. Fulton offered a friendly amendment to reduce the number of answers, but it was not accepted. Passed 6-1-1 (For: D. Johnson, A. Fulton, R. Hybels, J. Johnson, A. McRee, J. Mathias; Against: S. Richards; Abstaining: L. McGrew).

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 17 B, strike and replace “other entities, public or private” with “a public or private entity”.

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 18, add “(Hamlets)” after “centers” and replace the answers with: A Strongly support, B Some support, C Don’t care, D Don’t support, E Strongly don’t support.

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 19, replace question with “If you support Hamlets, where should they be located?”

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 20, add “(Hamlets)” after “centers”.

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 21, add “the center of” before “town”.

Action: Unanimous consent to add a new question after 21 “21a. How do you feel about the current amount of automobile traffic in your neighborhood?” with the same answers as # 21 and renumber the questions in the next draft.

Action: Unanimous consent to replace question # 22 with “Should Norwich develop a park and ride system?”

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 24, strike and replace “state” with “condition”.

Action: Unanimous consent to replace question # 26 with “26. Should the town protect these resources with more, the same, or less regulations.” and rewrite the answers to include three boxes labeled “more”, “same” and “less”, and add “(seasonal)” after “Vernal”.

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 27, strike “more” from question.

Action: Unanimous consent to, in # 28, strike “more” from question and strike and replace “Fewer” with “Less”.

Action: Motion by J. Mathias to keep question 30 as suggested by Kathleen Kanz in Draft 3.

Second S. Richards. Failed 3-5-0 (For: L. McGrew, J. Mathias, S. Richards; Against: D. Johnson, A. Fulton, R. Hybels, J. Johnson, A. McRee).

Action: Motion by D. Johnson to replace the column heading in # 30 with those approved in Draft 2 (None, Not much, Some, A lot, A whole lot). Second R. Hybels. Passed 5-3-0 (For: D. Johnson, A. Fulton, R. Hybels, J. Johnson, A. McRee; Against: L. McGrew, J. Mathias, S. Richards).

Discussion of the cover letter followed. Opinions were voiced that the draft from Kathleen Kanz was too complicated and consisted of mostly facts which some felt unnecessary and others felt needed. Many felt that the cover letter should provide a brief introduction, provide instructions and notification of the raffle, and mainly provide incentive for the survey to be filled out and returned.

Action: Motion by S. Richards to cancel the survey because of an unwillingness of the PC to put details and facts related to questions into the cover letter. Second L. McGrew. Failed 2-5-1 (For: L. McGrew, S. Richards; Against: D. Johnson, A. Fulton, J. Johnson, A. McRee, J. Mathias; Abstaining: R. Hybels).

There was some discussion as to the draft budget and estimated volunteer labor prepared by S. Richards.

4. Zoning Regulation Revisions

Expansion of Village Residential District - Hybels & Mathias

There was a description and brief explanation of a proposed expansion of the Village Residential District in an area South of Church Street and North of I-91 including the former Agway property which currently has a potential for development of affordable housing by Twin Pines and Housing Vermont. Discussion included the following:

- § The total build-out of all affected parcels and the impact to and carrying capacity of town infrastructure needs to be studied, specifically the roads (traffic impacts), water supply system (potential need to filter due to increased demand), and the influence on town character;
- § The village boundaries have not changed for a long time and this cannot set precedent to expand the VR District in other areas;
- § Development must be limited by the use of on-site septic systems (community or individual) and the expansion must not encourage any desire for municipal sewer;
- § Costs to taxpayers must be studied. Sidewalk, bike path, road improvements, water filtering station, municipal sewer components are some of the potential cost items.

Continue Review 4-05 revision notes. - skipped

Village Buffer - Mixed Use - Open Space - Shoreline Protection - skipped

6. Old Business

Taxes & development meeting. - Update - Jaye Pershing Johnson -

Action: D. Johnson had unanimous consent to delegate J. Johnson to organize the meeting which would include people/person from the state (in addition to those from the School Board and Finance Committee), and which would include issues of demographics and influence of additional teachers when needed. The general format of the meeting is to involve open dialog (questions, discussion) between the guests and planning commissioners. Public comment would be invited at the end, but not during the open dialog.

*Punch list Item #1 Open Space Sub-Committee - update - Douglas Hoffman - skipped
Post Office update - Lynn McGrew*

L McGrew reported that it seems there is less likelihood that the post office will remain in the business district. Discussion included how involved the PC should be and what might be done.

Ideas included:

- § if the fire/police are to move, would the USPS purchase that location;
- § are there other landowners in the business district with interest in leasing space to the USPS;
- § can an informal private committee be organized to tackle this issue.

Follow up on personnel report from the Chair

D. Johnson said he would have the report by the end of September.

7. New Business

Use of e-mail - Adele Fulton

The appropriate use and volume of e-mail for PC business was discussed. It seemed to make sense that sending draft minutes and corrections, draft reports and first round comments, and information for discussion at meetings by e-mail provided time for thought and research prior to the meeting, saved time at the meeting, and was public information to be copied to P. Dechert. An observation was made that e-mail sent to fewer than five members at a time would not normally be considered a public document. It was suggested that comments on comments should not be sent by e-mail, but rather presented at a meeting for discussion there.

8. Minutes - 7/28/05 - Postponed to next meeting

9. Amendments to Planning Commission Bylaws - Postponed to next meeting with the understanding that the notice requirement is satisfied. Please see minutes of 7/28/05 for amendment language.

10. Future Agenda Items & Schedule

- Thursday, August 25 - 6:30 PM Regular Meeting
- Thursday, September 8 - 6:30 PM Regular Meeting
- Thursday, September 22 - 6:30 PM Regular Meeting
- Thursday, September 29 - 6:30 PM Special Meeting - Taxes and Development

10. Comments from the Public - none

11. Adjournment

Procedure: Motion by A. Fulton to adjourn. Second S. Richards. Passed unanimous.
Meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey D. Mathias, acting scribe

Jeffrey D. Mathias, Clerk, Norwich Planning Commission

Approved: August 25, 2005