

**NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE**

**AGENDA**

Monday, July 29, 2019  
Tracy Hall, Multi-Purpose Room

MEETING: 5:00 PM

1. Approve Agenda
2. Comments from the Public
3. Approve Minutes – July 1, 2019
4. Announcements, Reports & Correspondence
  - a. Richards Email re: Mega Development s Again Explained, 7-16-19
  - b. The Affordable Housing Strategy to be discussed on Thursday September 12, 2019. 6:30 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room Tracy Hall
5. Housing Needs Document — Loeb/ Lubell
6. Public Outreach for Affordable Housing Strategy
7. Other Business
8. Comments from the Public

Enclosures:

1. AH Minutes\_2019\_7-1D
2. Richards Email 7-16-19
3. Housing Needs Document

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE  
DRAFT MINUTES

Monday, July 1, 2019 – Tracy Hall, Multipurpose Room

**Members Present:** Ralph Hybels, Creigh Moffatt, Jeff Lubell, Paul Manganiello, Brian Loeb

**Members Absent:** Jeff Goodrich, Kathleen Shepherd

**Staff:** Rod Francis

**Others/Public:**

Chair Hybels called the meeting to order at: 6:03 PM

1. Agenda. Moffatt moved and Manganiello seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried 5 — 0
2. Comments from the Public None
3. Minutes. Manganiello moved and Lubell seconded a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Motion carried 5 — 0.
4. Affordable Housing Strategy Document – Lubell. The subcommittee reviewed the document as circulated in the packet, making minor edits.

Moffatt moved and Manganiello seconded a motion to accept the Affordable Housing Strategy as amended, and transmit it to the Planning Commission with a recommendation for approval. Motion carried 5 — 0

5. Housing Needs Document — Loeb/ Lubell The group agreed to discuss this at a subsequent meeting.
6. Other Business

- a) Next Meeting will be JULY 29 at 5:00pm
- b) The Affordable Housing Strategy will be discussed on Thursday September 12, 2019. 6:30pm in the Multi-Purpose Room Tracy Hall

7. Comments from the Public. None
8. Meeting Adjourned at 7:20pm

*Affordable Housing Subcommittee Agendas and Minutes available at: <http://norwich.vt.us/Affordable-Housing/>*

- **X-original-from:** Stuart Richards <stuartlrichards50@gmail.com>
  - **From:** "Stuart Richards via norwich list" <norwich@lists.vitalcommunities.org>
  - **To:** <norwich@lists.vitalcommunities.org>
  - **Cc:** Herb Durfee <HDurfee@norwich.vt.us>, Rod Francis <RFrancis@norwich.vt.us>
  - **Subject:** [Norwich] MEGA DEVELOPMENTS AGAIN EXPLAINED
  - **Date:** Tue, 16 Jul 2019 15:31:05 -0400
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Dear Readers,

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

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

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

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

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

With respect to affordable housing it's unfortunate that there is less today in Norwich than there has been in the past. It is distressing to see the loss of farms, blue collar workers, single parents and native Vermonters who either can't or choose not to live in Norwich. Back in 2002 as former Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee I wrote a Minority Report. It is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5ztntop> At the time I estimated that 22.6% of Norwich's housing stock was affordable. My opinions caused my removal as Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee. The numbers today are far different: <https://tinyurl.com/y3wjkska9> Over the years the Affordable Housing Committee, Planning Commission and Selectboard have attempted to establish a framework which would enable affordable housing. It's unfortunate that they've failed and that they failed to support the recent effort by Norwich Affordable Housing Inc. that might have created 7 affordable housing units.

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

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

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

All the best,

Stuart Richards  
802-649-3928