

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION
Thursday January 28, 2021, 6:30pm

MINUTES

Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87406704359>

Meeting ID: 874 0670 4359

Members Present: Melissa Horwitz (C), Brian Loeb, Jaci Allen, Jeff Lubell, Leah Romano, Ernie Ciccotelli
Public Present: Stuart Richards, Linda Cook, Roger Arnold, Claudette Brochu
Staff: Rod Francis

Meeting Opened: 6:33pm

1. Approve Agenda:

Allen moved and Lubell seconded a motion to approve the Agenda. Motion carried 6—0.

2. Meeting Objectives:

- Discuss approaches to a wastewater needs assessment.
- Discuss process and policies for the Planning Commission

3. Public Comment: None

4. Review and approve Minutes December 10, 2020:

Allen moved and Romano seconded a motion to approve the minutes of December 10, 2020 as amended (Linda Cook was present). Motion carried 6 – 0.

5. Announcements, Reports, Updates & Correspondence:

- Correspondence: none
- Updates: none

6. Discuss approaches to a wastewater needs assessment:

Francis introduced the material provided in the packet which comprised outtakes from two wastewater studies from Vermont communities. To set the context he related how as measured by land area less than two percent of Vermont is serviced by wastewater treatment facilities, and that less than 55 percent of all housing units in Vermont are connected to wastewater treatment facilities. The lowest level of access in the country.

The excerpted material from the wastewater studies illustrated:

- the scope of standard wastewater assessment studies
- how surveys were used to establish current conditions and future needs
- how on-site wastewater [septic] permits were reviewed
- how communities established different priorities
- how public buildings may be a focal point of such an assessment

Commissioners discussed whether Norwich was ready to explore the needs for such a study by undertaking an online survey of village property owners and adjacent areas.

The meeting discussed the current status of work exploring solutions to the failed on-site wastewater system at Marion Cross School (MCS) and the proposal to establish a forced main (pumped) connection from MCS to Hartford connecting a number of properties on Route 5 South in Norwich. No agreement has been reached.

Francis outlined for the meeting the current known status of studies undertaken for Hartford to assess the impact of extending wastewater service to part of Norwich, the range of planning and grant administration actions that have yet to be undertaken by Hartford or the Town of Norwich and other issues not yet addressed.

Stuart Richards informed the meeting that the public records of the MCS school board include three or four letters from Pathways Consulting LLC who are under contract with MCS to study options for solving their wastewater problem. These documents provide progress reports on exploring wastewater option for MCS,

including the option of connecting to Hartford. He also mentioned the Norwich 2005 Wastewater Study which he summarized as reporting little enthusiasm for a municipal wastewater system.

Roger Arnold observed the scope of work that still needed to be done of the issue of wastewater provision in Norwich. Asking what professional support would be needed to bring more people to the table. He suggested that if, as a community, Norwich identifies itself as a place that wants to address affordable housing in the context of the broader Upper Valley region there must be state resources (funding) to facilitate dialogue between stakeholders.

Lubell identified three things for the Planning Commission to do:

1. engage with MCS at the next level of conversation around the question of connecting to the Hartford municipal wastewater system with regard to timing and cost, and possible design options
2. verify that the Route 5 S corridor could connect to the Hartford system, confirm existing property owners interest and if there are people in and around the village that may also have an interest in joining any system
3. structured analysis of all the issues (ideally using an outside consultant) and making sustained focused presentation exploring opportunities as a way of furthering the conversation

Allen suggested that commission should remember that Hartford is not the only option, and that we should explore all the options

Brochu informed the meeting she had last spoken with Tom Candon (MCS Board Chair) on the wastewater issue early Fall

Lubell agreed to invite Tom Candon to next commission meeting

Commissioners should get material to Allen for creating a presentation on wastewater no later than February 25

7. Update from the Affordable Housing Committee:

Lubell reported that the subcommittee has concluded its search for possible public land and identified a possible site near the corner of Bragg Hill Road and Beaver Meadow Road (the site of the brick oven). This could potentially accommodate two to four housing units. Preliminary investigations suggest some potential (while acknowledging the need for public process and more discussion). The subcommittee is also investigating how to advocate for reform of state wastewater regulations that would allow more housing in more locations.

8. Discuss process and policies for the Planning Commission: Deferred

9. Other Business: None

10. Future Meeting Schedule & Agendas

- Discussion of processes and policies for the Planning Commission (including term limits)

11. Public Comment: None

Meeting adjourned: 8:28pm

Future Meetings:

Thursday, March 4, 6:30pm Regular Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Rod Francis

APPROVED 03-04-2021