

Norwich Planning Commission
Regular meeting – October 14th, 2025 6:30pm

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

Topic: Planning Commission Regular Meeting
Time: October 14th, 2025, 6:30 PM
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81307504748>
Meeting ID: 813 0750 4748
888 475 4499 US Toll-free

AGENDA

1. Open Meeting; determine quorum
2. Approve Agenda
3. Public comment on items not on agenda
4. Discussion of TRORC Future Land Use Map
5. Discussion Enhanced Energy work plan
6. Review Draft FY26 Municipal Planning Grant
 - a. Review Draft
 - b. Review Municipal Resolution for Municipal Planning Grant
7. Discussion of STR regulations
 - a. Model Definitions & Regulations
 - b. Model Regulations
8. Approve minutes from July 8th and September 30th, 2025
9. Adjourn

Enclosures:

[Draft MPG application](#)
[Municipal Resolution form](#)
[Model STR Definition Regulations](#)
[Draft Minutes July 8th, 2025, September 30th, 2025](#)

2.2 Project Title: 2026 Master Plan for the Town of Norwich

2.3 Project Subtitle: Norwich will create a new Town Master Plan in 2026, engaging the community to address growth, housing, infrastructure, and resilience, ensuring a vibrant, sustainable future for all residents.

2.4 Project Description: Norwich Town Master Plan (2026)

The Town of Norwich faces a range of pressing challenges that threaten its long-term vitality and resilience. These include increasing development pressures, aging infrastructure, limited affordable housing, and the need to balance growth with the preservation of the town's rural character and natural resources. Norwich's existing planning documents are outdated and do not adequately address current issues such as affordable housing, climate resilience, transportation safety, and equitable access to community resources. Without a comprehensive, community-driven master plan, Norwich risks uncoordinated development, missed funding opportunities, and diminished quality of life for residents.

Approach to Solving the Problem

Norwich will undertake a robust, inclusive planning process to develop a new Town Master Plan. The project will be led by the Norwich Planning Commission in partnership with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission and conducted through the formation of a steering committee. A professional planning consultant will be hired to facilitate public engagement, analyze existing conditions, and draft the plan. The process will include:

- Community surveys and public forums to gather input from residents, businesses, and stakeholders.
- Focus groups targeting underrepresented populations to ensure broad participation.
- Data collection and mapping of current land use, infrastructure, housing, and environmental assets.
- Review of best practices and model plans from similar Vermont towns.
- Iterative plan development with multiple opportunities for public feedback.

Project Deliverables

- A comprehensive Norwich Town Master Plan, including actionable strategies for land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, natural resource protection, and climate resilience.
- Public engagement summary documenting outreach efforts and community input.

- GIS-based maps illustrating current conditions and future scenarios.
- Recommendations for zoning updates and capital improvements.
- Identification of funding sources and implementation steps for priority projects.

Intended Long-Term Outcomes

The Master Plan will serve as a roadmap for Norwich's sustainable growth and resilience over the next decade. Long-term outcomes include:

- Improved coordination of development and infrastructure investments.
- Expanded affordable housing options.
- Safer streets and multimodal transportation networks.
- Preservation of Norwich's historic village, rural character and natural resources.
- Increased community engagement and capacity for future planning efforts.
- Eligibility for state and federal funding to implement plan recommendations.

This project will position Norwich to proactively address its challenges and opportunities, ensuring a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient future for all residents.

2.5 Project Location

The town of Norwich with a specific focus on the historic village center and the newly designated, by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, transition area along the route 5 corridor.

4.1 Project Issue and Urgency

Recently, Norwich's Planning Commission and Selectboard welcomed new members bringing fresh perspectives and expertise. Energized by this renewed commitment, the Commission has launched the Norwich Town Master Plan project—an ambitious effort to unite stalled initiatives and current priorities into a comprehensive vision for Norwich's future. This new energy will drive a collaborative planning process, engaging residents and stakeholders to address growth, infrastructure, housing, and climate resilience. Supported by the existing Town Plan and updated zoning standards, Norwich is poised to set a clear course for sustainable development and community well-being. The Master Plan will ensure that Norwich's values and needs are reflected in every step, guiding the town toward a vibrant, resilient future.

4.2 Funding Needed

The MPG funding is the appropriate source of grant funding for an initial planning project like the one proposed here. With outside assistance, through the form on consulting support, Norwich will be able to make significant progress in redefining its vision for the future.

4.6 Project Management

The Norwich Town Master Plan project will be managed a steering committee formed by the Norwich Planning Commission. Members of the steering committee will include members of the historical preservation commission, and historical society, members of the energy committee, members of the selectboard and members of the public. Final decisions regarding the planning process and deliverables will be made by the Planning Commission, with recommendations forwarded to the Selectboard for final approval.

Each regular monthly Planning Commission meeting will include updates and discussion on the Master Plan project.

Routine check-ins and monthly updates will be conducted between the Planning Commission Chair, the Norwich Town Planning Director and Zoning Administrator, and the planning consultant. Progress reports will be provided to the Selectboard at their monthly meetings to ensure transparency and accountability.

The Planning Commission will champion the project, manage public engagement, and distribute information broadly once approved by the Selectboard. This management structure is designed to ensure effective oversight, broad community involvement, and successful completion of the Norwich Town Master Plan.

5.1 Public Outreach

Public participation is vital to the success of the Norwich Town Master Plan. Our goal is to inform and involve as many Norwich residents as possible throughout the planning process. In addition to traditional outreach methods—such as community surveys, press releases, articles in local newspapers and newsletters, updates on the Town website and social media—the Planning Commission will hold open meetings monthly, with dedicated Master Plan sessions for public input.

We will expand engagement through small group conversations with full-time, long-time, and part-time residents, as well as targeted meetings with local businesses, organizations, and underrepresented groups. Recognizing the challenges some residents face with connectivity or transportation, we will offer multiple ways to participate, including virtual forums and in-person events at accessible locations.

To further strengthen outreach, Norwich will partner with regional organizations and planning experts to facilitate public engagement sessions, ensuring broad participation and meaningful input. This inclusive approach will help shape a Master Plan that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of the entire Norwich community.

DRAFT

FY26 Municipal Resolution for Municipal Planning Grant

WHEREAS, the Municipality of _____ is applying for funding as provided for in the FY26 Budget Act and may receive an award of funds under said provisions; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Housing and Community Development may offer a Grant Agreement to this Municipality for said funding; and

WHEREAS, the municipality is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes or that the municipality has voted at an annual or special meeting to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes,

Now, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the Legislative Body of this Municipality enters into and agrees to the requirements and obligations of this grant program including a commitment to match funds.
2. That the Municipal Planning Commission recommends applying for said Grant;

(Name of Planning Commission Chair)

(Signature)

- 3a. That (Name)_____ Title_____

who is either the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as defined by 10 VSA §683(8), or is a Select Board Member, the Town Manager, the City Manager, or the Town Administrator, is hereby designated to serve as the Municipal/Authorizing Official (M/AO) for the Grant Electronic Application and Reporting System (GEARS), and to execute the Grant Agreement and other such Documents as may be necessary to secure these funds.

- 3b. (Alternate Authorizing Official for redundancy)

That (Name)_____ Title_____

who is either the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as defined by 10 VSA §683(8), or a Select Board Member, is the Town Manager, the City Manager, or the Town Administrator, is hereby designated to serve as the Municipal/ Authorizing Official (M/AO) for the Grant Electronic Application and Reporting System (GEARS), and to execute the Grant Agreement and other such Documents as may be necessary to secure these funds.

- 3c. That (Name)_____ Title_____

is hereby designated as the Grant Administrator, the person with the overall Administrative responsibility for the Municipal Planning Grant program activities related to the application, and any subsequent Grant Agreement provisions.

Passed this _____ day of _____, _____.

- ☐ **(For rural towns or consortia only)** The regional planning commission will serve as agent for the municipality or consortium. *(Check the box if the municipality authorizes its regional planning commission to prepare the application, support grant administration and be exempt from competitive selection if serving as project consultant.)*

LEGISLATIVE BODY

(name)

(signature)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESOLUTION FORM

- A. The Legislative Body of the Municipality must adopt this resolution. This Form requires filling in the name of the municipality, the Legislative Body (e.g. Selectboard), and the name and title of the Municipal/ Authorizing Official(s) (M/AOs); and the Grant Administrator.
- B. Following formal adoption, a majority of the legislative body must sign the Resolution. The Chair of the Planning Commission must also sign upon endorsement by vote of the Planning Commission.
- C. This form must be either uploaded to the online application or grant, or in the event the form cannot be uploaded, it may be emailed to:
Jennifer.lavoie@vermont.gov
- D. If emailed, an electronic copy of the submitted Resolution document will be uploaded by DHCD staff and available online.
- E. Please note that the designated Municipal/Authorizing Official(s) and Grant Administrator must also register for an account in the online grants management system, if they have not done so already, before the application can be considered complete.

CONSORTIUM APPLICATIONS: For a consortium, each municipality must complete a separate Resolution form. All municipalities in a consortium must designate the same Municipal/Authorizing Official(s) and grant Administrator.

Short-Term Rental (from 18 V.S.A. § 4301)

A furnished house, condominium, or other dwelling room or self-contained dwelling unit rented on an owner occupied lot to the transient, traveling, or vacationing public for a period of fewer than 30 consecutive days and for more than 14 days per calendar year.

Commented [ST1]: I added this clause. The definition in 18 VSA 4301 does not differentiate owner vs non owner occupied

Owner Occupied

Where owner occupancy is required by the Town of Norwich Land Use Regulations, Owner Occupied shall mean occupancy of the premises by the property owner, where the subject property is the owner's primary Vermont residence.

Short Term Rental Requirements

- a. Short Term Rental (STR) of an owner-occupied property in all Districts is a permitted use in all zoning districts and requires a zoning permit. Short Term Rentals of non-owner-occupied property is a conditional use in all districts. An STR permit does not run with the land. A change of ownership shall require a new STR permit.
- b. The contact information required by 18 V.S.A. 4467 shall be displayed in plain sight within the STR.
- c. The owner of the STR or the owner's designated manager must be geographically proximate and available and on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to respond in the event of an incident.
- d. The Vermont Short-Term Rental Safety, Health and Financial Obligations Form, as required by 18 V.S.A. 4468(b), shall be completed and displayed in plain sight within the STR.
- e. The owner shall obtain the educational information packet regarding Short-Term Rentals provided by the Vermont Division of Fire Safety, as required by 18 V.S.A. 4468(a).
- f. Dwelling Unit Capacity for a Short-Term Rental is two occupants per approved bedroom plus 2 additional occupants. For example, a 3-bedroom dwelling can be rented to 8 guests (3 bedrooms X occupants plus 2 additional occupants = 8). The occupancy of condominiums is determined by Act 250 permit and the plus 2 occupants does not apply.
- g. The number of approved bedrooms is determined by a state Wastewater and Water Supply Permit, a state Land Use (Act 250) Permit or, for units constructed before July 1, 2007, a town zoning or septic permit. For septic systems built before 1975, the best evidence for the number of bedrooms on December 31, 2006 is used.
- h. Accurate occupancy limits shall be included in all advertisements of the STR.

- i. The owner of the STR is responsible for renter compliance with the Town's Noise Ordinance.
- j. All vehicles associated with the STR of a property, including guests of the short-term renter(s), shall have designated off-road parking and not use shared private driveways, private roads, or public highways, unless public parking is readily available.
- k. Provisions must be in place for timely trash removal after each rental.

DRAFT

Norwich Planning Commission

Regular Meeting – July 8th, 2025 6:30pm

Members Present: Jeff Goodrich, Jaan Laaspere, Bob Pape, Mary Gorman

Zoning Administrator: Steven True

Public Present: Jeff Lubell

Meeting Opened: 6:30 pm

1. Open meeting; quorum met

2. Approve Agenda

Goodrich moved, seconded by Bob Pape, to approve the agenda.

Motion passed 4-0

3. Correspondence

The board accepted Jeff Lubell's correspondence on behalf of the Affordable Housing Subcommittee (AHSC) regarding how upcoming changes to Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Planning Commission (TRORC) future land-use maps will affect Act 250 & State Designation programs. Laaspere notes that this is the first item on the agenda, and reserves conversation to that item.

4. Comment from the Public on items not on the agenda: No public present to comment on items not on the agenda.

5. Act 181 and Land Use Review Board (LURB) Overview

- a. In light of an upcoming visit from TRORC staff to talk about the changes to their Future Land Use Map, members discussed and reviewed a presentation from Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) regarding Act 181 & the newly formed Land Use Review Board.
- b. Discussion focused on the Future Land Use classifications of Villages and Village areas as they relate to the Tier 1A/B Act 250 exemptions and the new state designations.
- c. Members discussed housing targets as product of the new regional plan.
- d. There was consensus to prepare for the upcoming visit by TRORC scheduled for September. Jaan to reach out to TRORC for more details. Staff to circulate background material.

6. Discussion of 2025 Priorities and Goals

- a. Members discussed starting work on the next round of amendments to the Land Use Regulations. Members were asked to circulate items from their notes to include in the next round of amendments.
- b. Members discussed the upcoming Municipal Planning Grant with members advocating for a transportation/pedestrian focus and others for updating our scenic resource

inventory. The FY26 MPG will be released at the end of the month with a deadline for submission in November. Staff to circulate MPG info when it's available.

- c. Members reviewed a presentation from TRORC regarding Municipal Capital Plans & Capital Budgets. The consensus from members was to open the Town Plan to include a Utilities & Facilities chapter, as this is a prerequisite to conducting Capital Planning work.

- i. Jeff Goodrich **MOTIONS** that as a first step to create a Capital Planning Program the Planning Commission write a Utilities & Facilities chapter of the Town Plan for adoption by the Selectboard. Bob Pape seconds.

Motion passed 4-0

- ii. Staff to circulate representative chapters from other Town Plans in the region.

7. Approve minutes from June 10th, 2025

- a. *Jeff Goodrich moved, seconded by Bob Pape, to approve minutes with changes. Mary Gorman abstains.*

Motion does not carry a majority (3-0), Approval moved to next regular meeting

8. Adjourn

Bob Pape moved, seconded by Jeff Goodrich, to adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm

Motion passed 4-0

Norwich PC Minutes 9/30/25

Members Present: Jeff Goodrich, Jaan Laaspere, Bob Pape, Christian Spalding, Ernie Ciccotelli, Vince Crow

Zoning Administrator: Steven True

Public Present: Pam Smith, Linda Addante, Robert Baum, Alan Rozycki, Heidi Classon, Lily Trajman, Brandon Classon, Matt Swett

Meeting Opened: 6:32 pm

1. Open Regular Meeting

2. Approve Agenda

Goodrich moved, seconded by Pape to approve the agenda with modifications

Motion passed 6-0

3. Public comment on items not on agenda

N/A

4. Correspondence

The PC acknowledged receipt of the correspondence included in the packet

5. Discussion of STR regulations

Laaspere stated that since 2020 the percentage of investor owned properties (not a primary residence) in the state of Vermont has risen from 7.5% to 31%. Currently there are no town regulations regarding short term rentals.

Goodrich expressed concern that there are no multifamily ordinances regarding long term rentals and would like to discuss as a future agenda item.

Some members of the public who own and operate short term rentals stated that currently there are very few houses currently on AirBNB and that renters have adhered the agreed upon code of conduct.

Other members of the public expressed concern that short term rentals can disrupt the communal environment of a neighborhood and are in direct opposition to affordable housing.

New regulations can either be added by updating the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, or by establishing an Interim Bylaw, which is in effect for 2 years and requires a single public hearing with the PC. The Zoning Administrator will work on a definition for Short Term Rentals and options for regulations for a discussion at a future meeting.

6. Discussion of FY26 Municipal Planning Grant

The group discussed an upcoming application for the FY26 Municipal Planning Grant. True stated that he has discussed topics with PC members, including a Pedestrian Master Plan, surveying interest in a Municipal wastewater system, and an update to the Scenic Inventory. Applications are due 11/3, projects would be funded for 2 years and awarded in January '26. Money would go toward consultation for planning activities.

Goodrich moved, seconded by Pape, to endorse the Zoning Administrator to edit and create a Village Master Plan grant application, which may include, but not be limited to issues relating to Pedestrian Safety and Transportation, Housing and Affordable Housing, Septic and Wastewater, and Infrastructure.

Motion passed 6-0

(8:00 pm Goodrich left the meeting)

7. Capital Planning Project work plan

The group discussed the role of the PC in the town's capital planning and agreed that the PC will start with an asset inventory related to Utilities and Facilities, such as community facilities (buildings, sidewalks etc.), water supply, library, transmissions lines, storm drainages and future needs for facilities and services.

8. Approve minutes

Spaulding moved, seconded by Pape, to approve the minutes from 8/12/25

Motion passed 4-0 (Crow Abstained)

Pape moved, seconded by Crow, to approve the minutes from 9/9/25

Motion passed 5-0

9. Adjourn

Ciccotelli moved, seconded by Crow, to adjourn the meeting at 8:27pm

Motion passed 5-0

Future Regular Meeting – 10/14/25 at 6:30 pm at Tracy Hall (also accessible via Zoom)

Minutes by Vincent Crow on 10/3/25