

**Norwich Planning Commission**  
**Regular meeting – May 12th, 2026, 6:30pm**

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

Zoom Information:

Topic: Planning Commission Regular Meeting

Time: April 14th, 2026, 6:30 PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81307504748>

Meeting ID: 813 0750 4748

888 475 4499 US Toll-free

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**AGENDA**

1. Open Meeting; determine quorum
2. Approve Agenda
3. Public comment or correspondence on items not on agenda
4. Organizational Meeting
  - a. Elections of officers
  - b. Planning Commission Bylaws Revision
  - c. 2026 work plan, priorities and methods of work
5. Village Master Plan update
6. Short-term Rental Interim Bylaw update
7. Energy chapter update
8. Approve minutes from April 14<sup>th</sup> & April 28<sup>th</sup>
9. Adjourn

Enclosures:

Current Bylaws

Model Bylaws

Village Master Plan Summary, Work Plan and Membership list

Correspondence from Alex Northern re: STR bylaw

Legal research re: STR bylaw

SECOND draft Norwich Short-Term Rental Interim Bylaw

Minutes from February 10<sup>th</sup>, April 14<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>

By-Laws of the Norwich Planning Commission  
Adopted 10-12-21

I. General

The purpose, Functions, organization and procedures of this Commission shall be consistent with those established by the Vermont Legislature (VSA Title 24, Chapter 117 and appendices).

II. Duties and Powers as therein defined:

1. Prepare and recommend the Municipal Development Plan (Subchapter 5) and amendments thereto.
2. Prepare and recommend zoning, subdivision and flood hazard area by-laws (Subchapter 6) and amendments thereto.
3. Administer bylaws adopted under this chapter, except to the extent that those functions are performed by a development review board.
4. Make studies and recommendations on land development, urban renewal, transportation, economic and social development, urban beautification, historic and scenic preservation, and conservation, development and protection of natural resources.
5. Prepare and recommend codes and regulations for buildings.
6. Review and comment on Capital Budget prior to Selectboard approval.
7. Hold public meetings for discussion of any of the above recommendations and procedures.
8. Other powers granted to the Commission by VSA T.24, Ch.117, Section 4325, including requiring relevant information from other municipal officers, entering upon land to make surveys and examinations, hiring staff and consultants, participating in regional plans and programs, and in general, acting as an advisory committee to the Selectboard and the community on developments in general within and impinging on the Town of Norwich.

III. Membership.

1. This commission shall consist of between five and nine voting members as determined by the Selectboard. Members shall be appointed for four year terms by the Selectboard, each term to start on May 1<sup>st</sup> except for appointments to fill a term created by a resignation.
2. In the last year of a member's term, each member is required to notify the Chair and the Selectboard by April 1<sup>st</sup> whether the member wishes to be considered for another term,

3. At its first meeting after May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Commission shall elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Clerk. The Clerk may or may not be a member of the Commission. The Chair shall normally preside at all meetings, the Vice-Chair presiding in the Chair's absence. When both these officers must be absent from a meeting, the voting members present shall decide who shall preside pro tem. The Chair or the Vice-Chair of the Commission shall sign all decisions made by the Commission.

4. If the Chair, Vice-Chair, or Clerk resigns their office before the end of their term, the Commission shall elect a replacement for that office at its next regular meeting. The new officer will remain in office until the next election of officers.

5. Each year from one Town Meeting Day to the next, each voting member of the Commission is required to attend at least 60% of the scheduled meetings. If in any case this requirement is not met, the Commission shall review the situation and take appropriate action up to and even including a recommendation to the Selectboard that the member be removed for neglect of duty.

6. The Clerk shall provide each new member with copies of the Planning Commission By-laws, the Town of Norwich Conflict of Interest Policy, the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, the current Town Plan, Title 24, Chapter 117, copies of meeting minutes for the previous six months, and any other pertinent information. If preferred by new member, an online address for these documents may be provided instead of paper copies.

7. Each year at the first meeting after Town Meeting Day, the Clerk shall read the Planning Commission By-laws to the members. This requirement may be waived by a majority vote if all members indicate that they have recently or will soon reread the by-laws.

8. The Chair shall appoint members to subcommittees and to any other committee in response to a request for representatives from the Commission. If challenged, these appointments shall be confirmed by a majority vote of members present.

#### IV. Organization of Meetings.

1. Vermont law requires that meetings of Planning Commissions be open to the public. It shall be the duty of the clerk to warn regular, special, and emergency meetings in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law (See attached).

2. A special meeting of the Commission may be called at any time by the Chair, or by a majority of the voting members, and it shall be the duty of the Clerk to warn the meeting in compliance with the Open Meeting Law.

3. At each meeting, all members may contribute suggested items for the next agenda. Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk will prepare a draft agenda based upon member input and any other

pressing business that arises following the meeting. The Clerk will furnish each voting member with the draft agenda for the next meeting together with minutes of the last meeting and any pertinent documents due for discussion at least 3 business days before the meeting.

4. As needed, the voting members present may designate one or more members to speak on behalf of the Planning Commission and its actions at public meetings, to a member of the press, or in another forum.

5. The Clerk shall post draft and approved minutes of each meeting of the Commission on the public bulletin board inside Tracy Hall. Copies of the minutes shall be available from the Clerk to anyone requesting them within five days. The Clerk shall deliver a copy of the approved minutes to the Town administrative secretary for distribution and filing with the Town Clerk.

6. Presence of a majority of the voting members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum. All decisions of the Commission shall be made in public meeting by a majority vote of the voting members. Procedural rules may be adopted by a vote of the majority of members present and voting. For the purpose of establishing a quorum for approving minutes, abstentions shall be counted with a majority vote of at least three members. If the vote is a tie, abstentions shall be counted as a vote against the motion.

7. A proposal to amend these by-laws must be included in the minutes and may not be voted on until the next regular meeting. For it to pass requires a two-thirds majority of the voting membership.

8. At the discretion of the presiding officer or at the request of any voting member at any meeting of the Commission, the proceedings shall be conducted according to the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised. In general, this entails:

- a) main motions shall be seconded before discussion is called for. This shall apply also to motions for amendment,
- b) the Chair may accept no more than two motions to amend at one time, and these shall be acted on in reverse order,
- c) call for the question is not debatable but requires majority approval for the question to be voted on immediately,
- d) a motion to table a matter requires a second and must be voted without discussion,
- e) a motion to take a matter from the table needs a second and may not be discussed,
- f) neither a motion to table or to take from the table may be repeated until after other actions have taken place,
- g) a motion to close the meeting, adjourn or recess is not debatable,
- h) a point of order is privileged and may be discussed before the presiding officer makes a decision, and
- i) when a motion has been acted upon, a motion to reconsider it is out of order until other business has been transacted,.

However, by agreement of the voting members present, the meeting may be conducted somewhat less formally if and when this seems desirable.

Attachments:

1. Vermont Open Meeting Law - *T.1 Chapter 5, §310 - §314*
2. Town of Norwich Conflict of Interest Policy – *Revised 2/27/19*

- **Title 1 V.S.A. § 310 - §314**
- **Subchapter 2: Public Information**
- **§ 310. Definitions**

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Business of the public body” means the public body’s governmental functions, including any matter over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.

(2) “Deliberations” means weighing, examining, and discussing the reasons for and against an act or decision, but expressly excludes the taking of evidence and the arguments of parties.

(3)(A) “Meeting” means a gathering of a quorum of the members of a public body for the purpose of discussing the business of the public body or for the purpose of taking action.

(B) “Meeting” shall not mean any communication, including in person or through e-mail, telephone, or teleconferencing, between members of a public body for the purpose of scheduling a meeting, organizing an agenda, or distributing materials to discuss at a meeting, provided that:

(i) no other business of the public body is discussed or conducted; and

(ii) such a communication that results in written or recorded information shall be available for inspection and copying under the Public Records Act as set forth in chapter 5, subchapter 3 of this title.

(C) “Meeting” shall not mean occasions when a quorum of a public body attends social gatherings, conventions, conferences, training programs, press conferences, media events, or otherwise gathers, provided that the public body does not discuss specific business of the public body that, at the time of the exchange, the participating members expect to be business of the public body at a later time.

(D) “Meeting” shall not mean a gathering of a quorum of a public body at a duly warned meeting of another public body, provided that the attending public body does not take action on its business.

(4) “Public body” means any board, council, or commission of the State or one or more of its political subdivisions, any board, council, or

commission of any agency, authority, or instrumentality of the State or one or more of its political subdivisions, or any committee of any of the foregoing boards, councils, or commissions, except that “public body” does not include councils or similar groups established by the Governor for the sole purpose of advising the Governor with respect to policy.

(5) “Publicly announced” means that notice is given to an editor, publisher, or news director of a newspaper or radio station serving the area of the State in which the public body has jurisdiction, and to any person who has requested under subdivision 312(c)(5) of this title to be notified of special meetings.

(6) “Quasi-judicial proceeding” means a proceeding which is:

(A) a contested case under the Vermont Administrative Procedure Act; or

(B) a case in which the legal rights of one or more persons who are granted party status are adjudicated, which is conducted in such a way that all parties have opportunity to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses presented by other parties, which results in a written decision, and the result of which is appealable by a party to a higher authority. (Added 1987, No. 256 (Adj. Sess.), § 1; amended 2013, No. 143 (Adj. Sess.), § 1; 2017, No. 166 (Adj. Sess.), § 1.)

- **§ 311. Declaration of public policy; short title**

(a) In enacting this subchapter, the legislature finds and declares that public commissions, boards, and councils and other public agencies in this State exist to aid in the conduct of the people’s business and are accountable to them pursuant to Chapter I, Article VI of the Vermont Constitution.

(b) This subchapter may be known and cited as the Vermont Open Meeting Law. (Amended 1979, No. 151 (Adj. Sess.), § 1, eff. April 24, 1980.)

- **§ 312. Right to attend meetings of public agencies**

(a)(1) All meetings of a public body are declared to be open to the public at all times, except as provided in section 313 of this title. No resolution, rule, regulation, appointment, or formal action shall be considered binding except as taken or made at such open meeting, except as provided under subdivision 313(a)(2) of this title. A meeting of a public body is subject to the public accommodation requirements of 9 V.S.A.

chapter 139. A public body shall electronically record all public hearings held to provide a forum for public comment on a proposed rule, pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 840. The public shall have access to copies of such electronic recordings as described in section 316 of this title.

(2) Participation in meetings through electronic or other means.

(A) As long as the requirements of this subchapter are met, one or more of the members of a public body may attend a regular, special, or emergency meeting by electronic or other means without being physically present at a designated meeting location.

(B) If one or more members attend a meeting by electronic or other means, such members may fully participate in discussing the business of the public body and voting to take an action, but any vote of the public body that is not unanimous shall be taken by roll call.

(C) Each member who attends a meeting without being physically present at a designated meeting location shall:

(i) identify himself or herself when the meeting is convened;  
and

(ii) be able to hear the conduct of the meeting and be heard throughout the meeting.

(D) If a quorum or more of the members of a public body attend a meeting without being physically present at a designated meeting location, the agenda required under subsection (d) of this section shall designate at least one physical location where a member of the public can attend and participate in the meeting. At least one member of the public body, or at least one staff or designee of the public body, shall be physically present at each designated meeting location.

(b)(1) Minutes shall be taken of all meetings of public bodies. The minutes shall cover all topics and motions that arise at the meeting and give a true indication of the business of the meeting. Minutes shall include at least the following minimal information:

(A) all members of the public body present;

(B) all other active participants in the meeting;

(C) all motions, proposals, and resolutions made, offered, and considered, and what disposition is made of same; and

(D) the results of any votes, with a record of the individual vote of each member if a roll call is taken.

(2) Minutes of all public meetings shall be matters of public record, shall be kept by the clerk or secretary of the public body, and shall be available for inspection by any person and for purchase of copies at cost upon request after five calendar days from the date of any meeting. Meeting minutes shall be posted no later than five calendar days from the date of the meeting to a website, if one exists, that the public body maintains or has designated as the official website of the body. Except for draft minutes that have been substituted with updated minutes, posted minutes shall not be removed from the website sooner than one year from the date of the meeting for which the minutes were taken.

(c)(1) The time and place of all regular meetings subject to this section shall be clearly designated by statute, charter, regulation, ordinance, bylaw, resolution, or other determining authority of the public body, and this information shall be available to any person upon request. The time and place of all public hearings and meetings scheduled by all Executive Branch State agencies, departments, boards, or commissions shall be available to the public as required under 3 V.S.A. § 2222(c).

(2) The time, place, and purpose of a special meeting subject to this section shall be publicly announced at least 24 hours before the meeting. Municipal public bodies shall post notices of special meetings in or near the municipal clerk's office and in at least two other designated public places in the municipality, at least 24 hours before the meeting. In addition, notice shall be given, either orally or in writing, to each member of the public body at least 24 hours before the meeting, except that a member may waive notice of a special meeting.

(3) Emergency meetings may be held without public announcement, without posting of notices, and without 24-hour notice to members, provided some public notice thereof is given as soon as possible before any such meeting. Emergency meetings may be held only when necessary to respond to an unforeseen occurrence or condition requiring immediate attention by the public body.

(4) Any adjourned meeting shall be considered a new meeting, unless the time and place for the adjourned meeting is announced before the meeting adjourns.

(5) A person may request in writing that a public body notify the person of special meetings of the public body. The request shall apply only to the calendar year in which it is made, unless made in December, in which case it shall apply also to the following year.

(d)(1) At least 48 hours prior to a regular meeting, and at least 24 hours prior to a special meeting, a meeting agenda shall be:

(A) posted to a website, if one exists, that the public body maintains or designates as the official website of the body; and

(B) in the case of a municipal public body, posted in or near the municipal office and in at least two other designated public places in the municipality.

(2) A meeting agenda shall be made available to a person prior to the meeting upon specific request.

(3)(A) Any addition to or deletion from the agenda shall be made as the first act of business at the meeting.

(B) Any other adjustment to the agenda may be made at any time during the meeting.

(e) Nothing in this section or in section 313 of this title shall be construed as extending to the Judicial Branch of the Government of Vermont or of any part of the same or to the Public Utility Commission; nor shall it extend to the deliberations of any public body in connection with a quasi-judicial proceeding; nor shall anything in this section be construed to require the making public of any proceedings, records, or acts which are specifically made confidential by the laws of the United States of America or of this State.

(f) A written decision issued by a public body in connection with a quasi-judicial proceeding need not be adopted at an open meeting if the decision will be a public record.

(g) The provisions of this subchapter shall not apply to site inspections for the purpose of assessing damage or making tax assessments or abatements, clerical work, or work assignments of staff or other personnel. Routine, day-to-day administrative matters that do not require action by the public body may be conducted outside a duly warned meeting, provided that no money is appropriated, expended, or encumbered.

(h) At an open meeting, the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity to express its opinion on matters considered by the public body during the meeting, as long as order is maintained. Public comment shall be subject to reasonable rules established by the chairperson. This subsection shall not apply to quasi-judicial proceedings.

(i) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the Parole Board from meeting at correctional facilities, with attendance at the meeting subject to rules regarding access and security established by the superintendent of the facility. (Amended 1973, No. 78, § 1, eff. April 23, 1973; 1979, No. 151 (Adj. Sess.), § 2; 1987, No. 256 (Adj. Sess.), § 2; 1997, No. 148 (Adj. Sess.), § 64, eff. April 29, 1998; 1999, No. 146 (Adj. Sess.), § 7; 2013, No. 143 (Adj. Sess.), § 2; 2015, No. 129 (Adj. Sess.), § 1, eff. May 24, 2016.)

• **§ 312a. Meetings of public bodies; state of emergency**

(a) As used in this section:

(1) "Affected public body" means a public body:

(A) whose regular meeting location is located in an area affected by a hazard; and

(B) that cannot meet in a designated physical meeting location due to a declared state of emergency pursuant to 20 V.S.A. chapter 1.

(2) "Hazard" means an "all-hazards" as defined in 20 V.S.A. § 2(1).

(b) Notwithstanding subdivisions 312(a)(2)(D) and (c)(2) of this title, during a declared state of emergency under 20 V.S.A. chapter 1:

(1) A quorum or more of an affected public body may attend a regular, special, or emergency meeting by electronic or other means without designating a physical meeting location where the public may attend.

(2) The members and staff of an affected public body shall not be required to be physically present at a designated meeting location.

(3) An affected public body of a municipality may post any meeting agenda or notice of a special meeting in two publicly accessible designated electronic locations in lieu of the two designated public places in the municipality, or in a combination of a designated electronic location and a designated public place.

(c) When an affected public body meets electronically under subsection (b) of this section, the affected public body shall:

(1) use technology that permits the attendance and participation of the public through electronic or other means;

(2) allow the public to access the meeting by telephone; and

(3) post information that enables the public to directly access and participate in meetings electronically and shall include this information in the published agenda for each meeting.

(d) Unless unusual circumstances make it impossible for them to do so, the legislative body of each municipality and each school board shall record any meetings held pursuant to this section.

(e) An affected public body of a municipality shall continue to post notices and agendas in or near the municipal clerk's office pursuant to subdivision 312(c)(2) of this title and shall provide a copy of each notice or agenda to the newspapers of general circulation for the municipality. (Added 2021, No. 157 (Adj. Sess.), § 8, eff. July 1, 2022.)

• **§ 313. Executive sessions**

(a) No public body may hold an executive session from which the public is excluded, except by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of its members present in the case of any public body of State government or of a majority of its members present in the case of any public body of a municipality or other political subdivision. A motion to go into executive session shall indicate the nature of the business of the executive session, and no other matter may be considered in the executive session. Such vote shall be taken in the course of an open meeting and the result of the vote recorded in the minutes. No formal or binding action shall be taken in executive session except for actions relating to the securing of real estate options under subdivision (2) of this subsection. Minutes of an executive session need not be taken, but if they are, the minutes shall, notwithstanding subsection 312(b) of this title, be exempt from public copying and inspection under the Public Records Act. A public body may not hold an executive session except to consider one or more of the following:

(1) after making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage:

- (A) contracts;
  - (B) labor relations agreements with employees;
  - (C) arbitration or mediation;
  - (D) grievances, other than tax grievances;
  - (E) pending or probable civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party;
  - (F) confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body;
- (2) the negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options;
  - (3) the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, provided that the public body shall make a final decision to hire or appoint a public officer or employee in an open meeting and shall explain the reasons for its final decision during the open meeting;
  - (4) a disciplinary or dismissal action against a public officer or employee; but nothing in this subsection shall be construed to impair the right of such officer or employee to a public hearing if formal charges are brought;
  - (5) a clear and imminent peril to the public safety;
  - (6) records exempt from the access to public records provisions of section 316 of this title; provided, however, that discussion of the exempt record shall not itself permit an extension of the executive session to the general subject to which the record pertains;
  - (7) the academic records or suspension or discipline of students;
  - (8) testimony from a person in a parole proceeding conducted by the Parole Board if public disclosure of the identity of the person could result in physical or other harm to the person;
  - (9) information relating to a pharmaceutical rebate or to supplemental rebate agreements, which is protected from disclosure by federal law or the terms and conditions required by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as a condition of rebate authorization under the Medicaid program, considered pursuant to 33 V.S.A. §§ 1998(f)(2) and 2002(c);

(10) security or emergency response measures, the disclosure of which could jeopardize public safety.

(b) Attendance in executive session shall be limited to members of the public body, and, in the discretion of the public body, its staff, clerical assistants and legal counsel, and persons who are subjects of the discussion or whose information is needed.

(c) The Senate and House of Representatives, in exercising the power to make their own rules conferred by Chapter II of the Vermont Constitution, shall be governed by the provisions of this section in regulating the admission of the public as provided in Chapter II, § 8 of the Constitution. (Amended 1973, No. 78, § 2, eff. April 23, 1973; 1979, No. 151 (Adj. Sess.), § 3, eff. April 24, 1980; 1987, No. 256 (Adj. Sess.), §§ 3, 4; 1997, No. 148 (Adj. Sess.), § 65, eff. April 29, 1998; 2005, No. 71, § 308a, eff. June 21, 2005; 2011, No. 59, § 7; 2013, No. 143 (Adj. Sess.), § 3; 2015, No. 23, § 1; 2017, No. 95 (Adj. Sess.), § 1, eff. April 11, 2018.)

• **§ 314. Penalty and enforcement**

(a) A person who is a member of a public body and who knowingly and intentionally violates the provisions of this subchapter, a person who knowingly and intentionally violates the provisions of this subchapter on behalf or at the behest of a public body, or a person who knowingly and intentionally participates in the wrongful exclusion of any person or persons from any meeting subject to this subchapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be fined not more than \$500.00.

(b)(1) Prior to instituting an action under subsection (c) of this section, the Attorney General or any person aggrieved by a violation of the provisions of this subchapter shall provide the public body written notice that alleges a specific violation of this subchapter and requests a specific cure of such violation. The public body will not be liable for attorney's fees and litigation costs under subsection (d) of this section if it cures in fact a violation of this subchapter in accordance with the requirements of this subsection.

(2) Upon receipt of the written notice of alleged violation, the public body shall respond publicly to the alleged violation within 10 calendar days by:

(A) acknowledging the violation of this subchapter and stating an intent to cure the violation within 14 calendar days; or

(B) stating that the public body has determined that no violation has occurred and that no cure is necessary.

(3) Failure of a public body to respond to a written notice of alleged violation within 10 calendar days shall be treated as a denial of the violation for purposes of enforcement of the requirements of this subchapter.

(4) Within 14 calendar days after a public body acknowledges a violation under subdivision (2)(A) of this subsection, the public body shall cure the violation at an open meeting by:

(A) either ratifying, or declaring as void, any action taken at or resulting from:

(i) a meeting that was not noticed in accordance with subsection 312(c) of this title; or

(ii) a meeting that a person or the public was wrongfully excluded from attending; or

(iii) an executive session or portion thereof not authorized under subdivisions 313(a)(1)-(10) of this title; and

(B) adopting specific measures that actually prevent future violations.

(c) Following an acknowledgment or denial of a violation and, if applicable, following expiration of the 14-calendar-day cure period for public bodies acknowledging a violation, the Attorney General or any person aggrieved by a violation of the provisions of this subchapter may bring an action in the Civil Division of the Superior Court in the county in which the violation has taken place for appropriate injunctive relief or for a declaratory judgment. An action may be brought under this section no later than one year after the meeting at which the alleged violation occurred or to which the alleged violation relates. Except as to cases the court considers of greater importance, proceedings before the Civil Division of the Superior Court, as authorized by this section and appeals therefrom, take precedence on the docket over all cases and shall be assigned for hearing and trial or for argument at the earliest practicable date and expedited in every way.

(d) The court shall assess against a public body found to have violated the requirements of this subchapter reasonable attorney's fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred in any case under this

subchapter in which the complainant has substantially prevailed, unless the court finds that:

(1)(A) the public body had a reasonable basis in fact and law for its position; and

(B) the public body acted in good faith. In determining whether a public body acted in good faith, the court shall consider, among other factors, whether the public body responded to a notice of an alleged violation of this subchapter in a timely manner under subsection (b) of this section; or

(2) the public body cured the violation in accordance with subsection (b) of this section. (Amended 1979, No. 151 (Adj. Sess.), § 4, eff. April 24, 1980; 1987, No. 256 (Adj. Sess.), § 5; 2013, No. 143 (Adj. Sess.), § 4; 2015, No. 129 (Adj. Sess.), § 2, eff. May 24, 2016; 2017, No. 113 (Adj. Sess.), § 1.)



CHARTERED 1761

**TOWN OF NORWICH, VERMONT  
CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

**Article 1. Authority.** Under the authority granted in 24 VSA §2291(20), the Selectboard of the Town of Norwich hereby adopts the following policy concerning conflicts of interest applying to all elected and appointed Public Officers of the Town, including members of all Town committees and boards.

**Article 2. Purpose.** The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the business of this municipality will be conducted in such a way that no Public Officer of the municipality will gain a personal or financial advantage from his or her work for the municipality and so that the public trust in its Public Officers and public bodies will be preserved. It is also the intent of this policy to encourage all decisions made by municipal officials to be based on the best interest of the community at large. This policy further seeks to promote transparency as the best protection against the threats posed to good governance by real and perceived conflicts of interest.

**Article 3. Definitions.** For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

A. **Conflict of interest** means any of the following:

1. A significant direct personal or financial interest of a Public Officer, or of an immediate family member, business associate, employer, or employee of the official, in the discretionary outcome of a cause, proceeding, application, or any other decision pending before the official or before the agency or public body in which the official holds office or is employed. "Conflict of interest" does not arise in the case of votes or decisions on matters in which the Public Officer has a personal or financial interest in the outcome, such as in the establishment of a tax rate, that is no greater than that of other persons generally affected by the decision, in cases where a decision or act is not subject to the discretion of the official or the body of which he or she is a part, or where such personal or financial interest is *de minimis*;
2. A situation where a public officer has publicly displayed a prejudgment of the merits of a particular quasi-judicial proceeding. This shall not apply to a member's particular political views or general opinion on a given issue; and

3. A situation where a public officer has engaged in *ex parte* communications with a party in a quasi-judicial proceeding that is before the public body to which that public officer belongs.
- B. **Emergency** means an imminent threat or peril to the public health, safety and welfare.
- C. **Ex parte communication** means direct or indirect communication between a member of a public body and any party, party's representative, party's counsel, or any person interested in the outcome of a quasi-judicial proceeding that occurs outside the proceeding and concerns the substance or merits of the proceeding.
- D. **Official act or action** means any legislative, administrative or judicial act performed by an elected or appointed officer or employee while acting on behalf of the municipality. This term does not apply to ministerial acts or actions involving no discretion.
- E. **Public body** means any board, council, commission or committee of the municipality
- F. **Public interest** means an interest of the community as a whole, conferred generally upon all residents of the municipality.
- G. **Public officer** means a person elected or appointed to perform executive, administrative, legislative or quasi-judicial functions for the municipality or appointed to a public body.
- H. **Quasi-judicial proceeding** means a case in which the legal rights of one or more persons who are granted party status are adjudicated, which is conducted in such a way that all parties have opportunities to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses presented by other parties, which results in a written decision, the result of which can be appealed by a party to a higher authority.
- I. **Financial interest** means a reasonably foreseeable financial effect, distinguishable from its effect on the public generally, on the Public Officer, a member of his or her immediate family, or on any of the following:
- (a) Any business entity in which the Public Officer has a direct or indirect investment.
  - (b) Any real property in which the Public Officer has a direct or indirect interest.
  - (c) Any source of income provided or promised to the Public Officer within 12 months prior to the time when the decision is made or action is taken.
  - (d) Any business entity in which the Public Officer is a director, officer, partner, trustee, or manager.
  - (e) Any donor of, or any intermediary or agent for a donor of, a gift or gifts aggregating two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) or more in value provided to, received by, or promised to the Public Officer within 12 months prior to the time when the decision is made or action is taken.
- J. **Personal interest** is an outside interest that is non-financial in nature but could reasonably be considered to affect one's ability to make unbiased decisions. Personal interests are by their nature more difficult to identify, so that officials should be more aware of them in themselves and more circumspect in ascribing them to others.

**Article 4. Actions Not Permitted.**

- A. A public officer shall not participate in any discretionary official decision, action or inaction if he or she has a conflict of interest in the outcome of the action.
- B. A public officer shall not personally participate in a deliberation leading to an act or decision in which he or she has a conflict of interest.
- C. Public officers shall not accept gifts or other offerings for personal gain by virtue of their public office.
- D. Public officers shall not use for private gain or personal purposes public resources not available to the general public, including but not limited to Town staff time, equipment, supplies, or facilities.

**Article 5. Disclosure.** Candid, detailed disclosure is the single best protection against conflicts of interest. Appropriate disclosure earns the respect of the public and of fellow Public Officers. A public officer who has reason to believe that he or she has a potential conflict of interest or an appearance of such a conflict, but believes that he or she is able to act fairly, objectively and in the public interest because no actual conflict exists shall, prior to participating in any official action on the matter, disclose to the public body at a public hearing the matter under consideration, the nature of the potential or apparent conflict of interest and why he or she believes that he or she is able to act in the matter fairly, objectively and in the public interest. Notwithstanding the foregoing, an actual or potential conflict need not be disclosed if the affected public officer chooses to recuse him or herself from consideration of or deliberation on the matter, except for publicly announcing the reason for recusal is due to a conflict or its potential.

**Article 6. Recusal.**

- A. A public officer shall recuse him or herself from any matter in which he or she has a conflict of interest, pursuant to the following:
  - 1. Any person may request that a public officer recuse him or herself due to a perceived conflict of interest. Such request shall not constitute a requirement that the public officer recuse him or herself.
  - 2. A public officer who has recused him or herself from a proceeding shall not sit with or deliberate with the affected body, or participate in that proceeding as a member of that body in any capacity.
  - 3. Once there has been a disclosure of an actual or perceived conflict of interest, other public officers shall be afforded an opportunity to ask questions or make comments about the situation. If a previously unknown conflict is discovered, the affected body may take evidence pertaining to the conflict and, if appropriate, adjourn to a short deliberative session to address the conflict. Executive session may be used for such discussion, in accordance with 1 VSA Section 313(4).

4. The affected body may adjourn the proceedings to a time certain if, after a recusal, it may not be possible to take action through the concurrence of a majority of the body, for example due to a lack of quorum. The body may then resume the proceeding once sufficient members are present.
5. In the case of a public officer who is an appointee, the public body which appointed that public officer shall have the authority to order that officer to recuse him or herself from the matter, subject to applicable law.

**Article 7. Quasi-Judicial Proceedings.** A higher conflict of interest standard applies in the context of quasi-judicial decision-making. Quasi-judicial decisions are rendered in situations where the rights of a particular individual are at stake (e.g., tax appeals, vicious dog hearings, land use decisions). In those situations, the affected individual has the right to receive constitutional due process, which includes the right to an impartial decision maker. If a municipal official with a conflict of interest participates in a quasi-judicial process, a court may determine that the official was not an impartial decision maker and may vacate the decision and order the matter be reconsidered without the participation of the conflicted member. See e.g. *Appeal of Janet Cote*, 257-11-02 Vtec (2003). Therefore, Public Officers should be more inclined to recuse themselves when they are participating in a quasi-judicial process.


**Article 8. Enforcement; Progressive Consequences for Failure to Follow the Town of Norwich Conflict of Interest Policy.** In cases where the conflict of interest procedures in Articles 5 and 6 have not been followed, the Selectboard may take progressive action to address possible violations of this policy. In taking these actions, the board shall follow these steps in order unless the public officer voluntarily waives any or all steps A, B, or C:

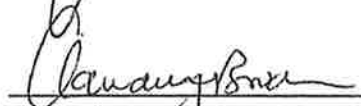
- A. The chair shall meet informally, in private, with the public officer to discuss possible conflict of interest violation, so long as such meeting would not itself constitute a quorum of the relevant public body.
- B. The Selectboard may meet to discuss the conduct of the public officer. Executive session may be used for such discussion, in accordance with 1 VSA §313(4). The public officer may request that this meeting occur in public. If appropriate, the board may admonish the offending public officer in private.
- C. If the board decides that further action is warranted, the board may admonish the offending public officer at an open meeting and reflect this action in the minutes of the meeting. The public officer shall be given the opportunity to respond to the admonishment.
- D. Appointed officials of the Town may be removed for cause following procedures required in 24 VSA §4323 (for the Planning Board, unless they are elected members) 24 VSA §4460 for the (Developmental Review Board), 24 VSA §4448 for the Zoning Administrator, 24 VSA §4503 (for the Conservation Commission).
- E. All other officials appointed by the Selectboard, and not covered by a contract, may be removed by majority vote of the Selectboard, or as may otherwise be dictated by statute.

**Conflict of Interest Policy**  
**Adopted May 23, 2018**

**Article 9. Effective Date.** This policy shall become effective immediately upon its adoption by the Town of Norwich Selectboard.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Pepper, Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Langhus

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Claudette Brochu, Vice-Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Layton

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Roger Arnold

Adopted by Norwich Selectboard 4/28/10  
Revised 6/23/10  
Revised 7/27/11  
Revised 8/23/17  
Revised 5/23/18  
Revised 2/27/19

**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Rules of Procedure**  
**and**  
**Rules of Ethics with Respect to Conflicts of Interest**

**Section I: Authority.**

The Planning Commission of the Town of Norwich hereby adopts the following rules of procedure in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4461(a) and 1 V.S.A. §§ 312(e), (f), and (h).

**Section II: Policy.**

These Rules are adopted to ensure consistent and fair treatment of applicants and interested persons and participants, orderly and efficient public proceedings, and compliance with state and federal law. These Rules shall also ensure that no board member will gain a personal or financial advantage from their work for the board, so that the public trust in municipal government will be preserved.

**Section III: Definitions.**

A. "Commission" means the Planning Commission.

B. "Commission member" means a regular member of the Planning Commission.

C. "Conflict of interest" means any one of the following:

1. A direct or indirect personal interest of a Commission member, a spouse, household member, child, stepchild, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, aunt or uncle, brother or sister-in-law, business associate, employer or employee, in the outcome of a cause, proceeding, application or any other matter pending before the Planning Commission.

2. A direct or indirect financial interest of a Commission member, a spouse, household member, child, stepchild, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, aunt or uncle, brother or sister-in-law, business associate, employer or employee, in the outcome of a cause, proceeding, application or any other matter pending before the Planning Commission.

3. A situation where a Commission member has publicly displayed a prejudgment of the merits of a particular proceeding before the board. This shall not apply to a member's particular political views or general opinion on a given issue.

4. A situation where a board member has not disclosed ex parte communications with a party in a proceeding before the board, pursuant to Section XII of these Rules.

D. "Deliberative session" means a private session of the Commission to weigh, examine, and discuss the reasons for and against an act or decision, from which the public is excluded. There shall be no taking of evidence or submission of testimony, nor need a deliberative session be publicly noticed. By motion and majority vote, the board may enter deliberative session during a hearing to consider a matter before it.

E. "Executive session" means a session of a public body from which the public is excluded, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313. Such private session may only be held for one of the reasons permitted by the statute, and no binding action may be taken in executive session.

F. "Ex parte communication" means direct or indirect communication between a member of the Planning Commission and any party, party's representative, party's counsel or any person interested in the outcome of any proceeding before the panel, that occurs outside of a public proceeding, and concerns the substance or merits of the proceeding.

G. "Official act or action" means any legislative, administrative or quasi-judicial act performed by any commission member.

H. "Public deliberations" means the weighing, examining, and discussing, in a public proceeding, the reasons for and against an act or decision, but expressly excludes the taking of evidence and the arguments of parties.

I. "Recuse" means to remove oneself from a particular board proceeding because of a real or perceived conflict of interest.

#### **Section IV: Regular Officers.**

The Planning Commission shall consist of nine regular members. After Town Meeting but prior to May 1, or at other times throughout the year as needed, the Planning Commission shall hold an organizational meeting and elect by majority vote, a Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk.

A. The Chair shall preside at all meetings, hearings, and deliberations, decide all points of order or procedure, and appoint members to any committee of the board. The Chair may administer oaths and may request the attendance of witnesses and the production of material relevant to any issue under consideration.

B. The Vice Chair shall assume the duties of the Chair whenever the Chair is absent, or at the Chair's request. The Clerk shall assume such duties whenever the Chair and the Vice Chair are absent, or at their request.

C. It shall be the duty of all members to review the minutes and other official records of Planning Commission meetings and actions, and correct and ratify these when appropriate and necessary.

D. The Clerk shall take minutes of all meetings, unless delegated to another member of the Planning Commission or staff.

#### **Section V: Regular and Special Meetings.**

Regular meetings to conduct business of the Planning Commission shall be held in the Town Offices at 6 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month, or as warranted. The person serving as Chair may cancel meetings at any time.

A. Special meetings may be called by the Chair, provided at least 24 hours notice is given to each member and the time and place of each special meeting is publicly announced at least 24 hours before the meeting.

B. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the entire Commission.

C. Members may participate by telephone or videoconferencing as long as the absent member can hear everything that is occurring at the meeting and everyone present at the meeting can hear the member.

D. All meetings shall be open to the public unless the Commission, by two-thirds majority vote, has entered a deliberative or executive session. The Commission may only hold an executive session pursuant to the reasons permitted by 1 V.S.A. § 313, and only after a two-thirds majority vote to enter executive session. Members of the public may participate by videoconferencing and as provided in these rules.

E. There shall be an agenda for each meeting. Those who wish to be added to the agenda shall contact the Planning Commission Chair or staff to arrange for a convenient time. The Chair shall determine the content of the agenda.

F. All business shall be conducted in the same order as it appears on the agenda, except that by majority consent, the Chair may alter the order of items to be considered and/or the time allotted.

G. The Chair shall rule on all questions of order or procedure and shall enforce these rules pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 312(h).

H. Speakers may participate throughout the meeting but only when recognized by the Chair. Such comment shall be limited to five minutes per speaker unless by majority consent the board sets a different time limit. The Commission shall apply consistent time limits to all recognized to speak. Each meeting shall have a period of time reserved for public comment. The Chair may extend or reduce this period of time as necessary.

I. Notice for hearings on the adoption, amendment, or repeal of bylaws and other regulatory tools shall be pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4444, as amended.

#### **Section VI: Public Hearings and Order of Business.**

Contested public hearings shall be conducted as quasi-judicial proceedings pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 310(8)(B). Hearings shall be publicly noticed in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §§ 4464(a)(1) and (2), as amended. Hearings shall not exceed two hours in length unless approved by a majority of members present.

Public comment may be offered during the hearing with the permission of the chair. The Commission shall apply consistent time limits to all persons recognized to speak.

The Chair shall conduct hearings in the following manner:

A. Open the hearing by reading the warning of the hearing.

B. Review the order of events, remind all present that the proceeding will be conducted in an orderly manner, and make copies of these Rules available upon request.

C. Request disclosure of conflicts of interest and ex parte communications.

D. Review the definition of interested persons in 24 V.S.A. § 4465(b), and explain that, pursuant to 24

V.S.A. § 4471(a), only an interested person who has participated in this proceeding may take an appeal of any decision issued in this proceeding.

E. Ask all who believe they meet the definition of interested person to identify themselves and to provide contact information. The Commission shall not make any determination as to party status in all proceedings. Anyone seeking to participate in a proceeding may do so, subject to these Rules and those established by the Chair, without regard to whether they meet the definition of an interested person.

F. Direct the applicant or their representative and all interested persons to take the following oath: I hereby swear that the evidence I give in the cause under consideration shall be the whole truth and nothing but the truth under the pains and penalties of perjury.

G. Accept written information presented to the Commission.

H. Invite the applicant or applicant's representative to present such application or proposal.

I. Invite Commission members to ask questions of the applicant or applicant's representative.

J. Invite interested persons and members of the public to present their information regarding the application or proposal.

K. Invite the applicant or applicant's representative to respond to information presented.

L. Invite more questions or comments from members of the Commission.

M. Invite more questions from interested persons and members of the public.

N. Allow final comments or questions from the applicant or their representative or members of the Commission.

O. Upon motion and majority approval, the Chair shall either adjourn the hearing to a time certain, or close the proceedings by stating that this is the final public hearing on the matter.

P. Upon adjournment of a hearing, the Commission shall then conduct public deliberations, or may vote to enter deliberative session. See Section III-D of these Rules.

#### **Section VIII: Site Visits.**

Site visits shall be open to the public; however, no testimony shall be taken and no ex parte communication shall occur. Site visits shall be held pursuant to the following conditions:

A. If, prior to a hearing, the Chair determines that a site visit will be necessary, the site visit may be scheduled prior to the hearing. Such site visits shall be publicly noticed in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §§ 4464(a)(1), (2).

B. If necessary, the Commission may recess a hearing to conduct a site visit at a property which is the subject of an application before the board.

C. If necessary, the Commission may adjourn a hearing to a time certain to conduct a site visit at a property which is the subject of an application before the board.

D. The minutes of the proceeding shall reflect that a site visit was held, who was present, and the nature and duration of the site visit.

#### **Section IX: Service List.**

The Clerk or staff shall create a list of all individuals who participated. The list shall include those who participated orally and those who participated in writing. All written decisions of the board shall be mailed to those on the list. The list shall include:

A. The names of those who participated in the proceedings.

B. A brief statement of the nature and content of participation by those who participated.

C. The mailing address of each of these persons.

#### **Section X: Decisions.**

The Commission shall make its decisions by public deliberation, unless by majority vote it has determined to make a decision in deliberative session. Deliberative sessions are not open to the public and need not be warned. Members of the Commission who have not heard all testimony and reviewed all evidence submitted for a particular application or proposal shall not participate in the proceeding. Absent Commission members may participate if they have reviewed recordings of the proceedings, and any evidence submitted, subject to the written consent of the applicant and all interested persons. The following rules shall apply to voting on decisions:

A. Motions shall be made in the affirmative.

B. The chair has the same voting rights as all members and can make motions.

C. All members present are expected to vote unless they have recused themselves.

D. Abstentions are strongly discouraged and shall not count towards either the majority or the minority.

E. For a motion to pass, it must receive the concurrence of a majority of the entire Commission, regardless of how many are present. 1 V.S.A. § 172; 24 V.S.A. § 4461(a).

F. The Commission shall issue a decision within 45 days of the final public hearing.

#### **Section XI: Conflicts of Interest**

Participation, disclosure of conflicts, and recusal shall be governed by the following procedures:

A. Participation. A Commission member shall not participate in any official action where they have a conflict of interest in the matter under consideration. A Commission member shall not, personally or through any member of their household, business associate, employer or employee, represent, appear

for, or negotiate in a private capacity on behalf of any person or organization in any proceeding pending before the Planning Commission.

B. Disclosure. At all hearings, the Chair shall request that Commission members disclose all potential conflicts of interest. When recognized by the Chair, any person may request disclosure of potential conflicts of interest.

Nonetheless, after disclosing a conflict or perceived conflict, a member who believes that they are able to act fairly, objectively, and in the public interest, shall disclose the nature of the potential conflict of interest, and the reason(s) why they are able to act in the matter fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. This shall be noted in the minutes of the proceeding.

C. Recusal. Commission members shall recuse themselves from any matter in which they have a conflict of interest, pursuant to the following:

1. The applicant or any person may request recusal due to a conflict of interest. Such request shall not constitute a requirement that members recuse themselves.

2. A Commission member who has recused him or herself from a proceeding shall not sit with the Commission, deliberate with the Commission, or participate in that proceeding as a Commission member in any capacity.

3. If a previously unknown conflict is discovered, the Commission may take evidence pertaining to the conflict, and if appropriate, adjourn to a short deliberative session to address the conflict.

4. The Commission may adjourn the proceedings to a time certain if, after a recusal, it may not be possible to take action through the concurrence of a majority of the Commission. The Commission may then resume the proceeding with sufficient members present.

#### **Section XII: Ex Parte Communications.**

Ex parte communication is prohibited. Any Commission member who inadvertently conducts ex parte communication must disclose such communication as required below.

A. Disclosure. At each hearing, the Chair shall request that members disclose any ex parte communications. Commission members who have received written ex parte communications shall place in the record copies of all written communications received as well as all written responses to those communications. Members shall prepare a memorandum stating the substance of all oral communications received, all responses made and the identity of each person making the ex parte communication, which shall become a part of the record of the proceedings.

#### **Section XIII: Removal.**

Upon majority vote, the Commission may request that the legislative body remove a Commission member from the Planning Commission. Commission members may be removed at any time by unanimous vote of the legislative body. 24 V.S.A. § 4323(a).

**Section XIV: Replacement**

Upon majority vote, the Commission may request that the legislative body remove a Commission member who has been absent for two or more meetings in a twelve month period without prior notification of the Chair.

**Section XV: Amendments.**

These rules may be amended at any regular or special meeting by a majority vote, provided that each Planning Commission member has been presented a written copy of the proposed amendment at least 24 hours before the meeting at which the vote is taken.

**Approved: Date:**

## **Norwich Village Master Plan 2026**

Norwich will undertake a robust, inclusive planning process to understand what residents value in the current village and how they would like to see the village evolve. The key deliverable will be a new Village Master Plan. The project will be led by the Norwich Planning Commission and facilitated by the formation of a steering committee. A professional planning consultant will be hired to facilitate public engagement, analyze existing conditions, build scenarios and draft the plan for review. The process will include:

- Designing rich community engagements to gather input from residents, businesses, and stakeholders.
- Conduct workshops targeting a wide range of interests 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 Village Master Plan, including actionable strategies for how the village could evolve to best serve the needs and desires of the community, addressing topics such as housing, infrastructure, community land and spaces, services, resilience, and historic preservation.
- Public engagement summary documenting outreach efforts and community input.
- GIS-based maps illustrating current conditions and future scenarios.
- Recommendations for zoning updates.
- Recommendations for capital improvements, -based on - initial and ongoing costs.
- Identification of funding sources and implementation steps for prioritized projects.

### **Intended Long-Term Outcomes**

The Village Master Plan will serve as a roadmap for Norwich's evolution over the next decade. This village plan will become an integral part of the full town plan re-write to be completed in 2028. 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.

### **Project Location**

The town of Norwich with a specific focus on the historic village center, surrounding village area and the newly designated transition area along the Route 5 corridor.

### **Project Management**

The Norwich Village Master Plan project will be managed by a steering committee formed by the Norwich Planning Commission. The steering committee will include members with a broad set of perspectives and interests, including historic preservation, families and children, affordable housing, conservation, town government, economic development, and a regional view. The steering committee will design public outreach to ensure all opinions are invited to participate in this community planning exercise. Decisions regarding the planning process and deliverables will be made by the Planning Commission, with recommendations forwarded to the Selectboard for final approval.

The Planning Commission will oversee 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 Village Master Plan.

### **Public Outreach**

Public participation is vital to the success of the Norwich Village 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 Village Plan sessions for public input.

## **2026 Norwich Village Master Plan – Workplan Outline**

### **Define project and create consultant RFP** [April – June]

#### Activities:

Steering committee formation and education

Village historical context

Planning Areas within a Town Plan

Pre-existing conditions of planning elements - physical, regulatory, human & prior planning

Collect background and frame questions on topics important to village planning:

- Village area boundary and focal areas
- Bike/Ped/Trails
- Recreational opportunities
- Goods, services and organizations
- Housing
- Village public activities
- Infrastructure

Events: 3 - 4 steering committee meetings May - June

#### Output:

- Statement of Work for all phases, including specific RFP for consultant
- Definition of necessary background information
- Create framing questions and capture steering committee's initial thoughts
- Plan for initial public discussions during summer

### **Hire consultant** [July & August]

#### Activities

Steering committee members engage with residents and town groups – specifics TBD

2 - 3 steering committee meetings over summer for updates on community conversations and consultant search

Output – Consultants hired & contract approved by Selectboard

### **Develop & Implement Public Engagement Program** [Sept – Nov]

Activities: TBD including topical forums, charettes, possible survey

#### Events:

3 – 4 steering committee meetings including consultant

Two charrettes with maximum public participation

Output:

- Articulated goals, objectives & policies to be incorporated into the draft plan
- Articulated implementation programs, including cost analysis, both capital cost and on-going cost of the changes proposed in the plan
- List of open questions and topics for possible follow-up

**Draft, edit and approve village plan** [January & February '27]

- Create plan drafts for review by Planning Commission
- Public review, hearings and Selectboard approval
- Create detailed list of follow up activities

## **STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Jaan Laaspere  
Christian Spalding  
Brendan Classen  
Andrew Torkelson  
Jess Phelps  
Brian Loeb  
Alec Orenstein  
Elena Kennedy  
Sheridan Zimmer  
Anne Sargent  
Cole Flannery  
Lucinda Walker

## Staff

Steven True  
Dr. Jean Richardson



**From:** Alexander Northern JD, MPA CFO  
Town of Norwich Fire Chief  
Deputy EMD  
Fire Warden

**To:** Norwich Planning Commission  
Norwich Selectboard

**Re:** Proposed Addition to Section 6 of the Interim Bylaw Short-Term Rental Proposal

**Date:** 4/16/26

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**Norwich Planning Commission:**

One of the significant gaps in fire safety for Town of Norwich residents, is the lack of any mechanism to hold short-term rental landlords accountable for the fire safety of their short-term rental units & tenants. This lack of knowledge translates into uncertainty when responding to addresses. This uncertainty leads to a lack of knowledge that assists the incident commander with their “size-up” (to carefully examine, assess, or evaluate an emergency scene or situation to make a judgment or decision). For instance, this lack of knowledge increases the challenge of responding to a single family home that suddenly has many people staying as a short term rental.

The lack of short-term rental (STR) accountability poses a threat to life safety when there are no requirements to ensure working smoke alarms in every bedroom and on every level, carbon monoxide detectors, and accessible fire extinguishers. Other essential safety accountability measures include clear evacuation plans, reachable exit

doors/windows, and adherence to local municipal codes. These measures also include checking electrical and heating systems.<sup>1</sup>

My proposal for this interim policy is to add language to a third category under part VI of the interim agreement. So, it would be VI(c). This is a DRAFT language proposal, subject to appropriate revision as this process moves forward. The proposed language for VI(c) includes:

(c) – Any ToN property owner that applies for and is granted a short-term rental permit shall provide, on an annual basis, the ToN Fire Department with written confirmation of the fire safety of the rental unit(s) in question.

The included attachment would be an example of a type of written confirmation. This would be mailed or dropped off by the permittee to the town clerk and passed on to the NFD Chief. There could also be an online option. This would lower the burden for some and provide more real-time information. The attachment is DRAFT language and can certainly be revised. However, this is what the State Division of Fire Safety currently uses as the blueprint for short-term rental fire safety accountability. Thanks for your attention to this matter. I stand ready to work with the commission on this vital policy implementation.

Sincerely,

*Alexander Northern*

Town of Norwich Fire Chief

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://safely.com/articles/how-to-ensure-your-rental-meets-local-safety-codes/#:~:text=Install%20Fire%20Safety%20Equipment,to%20prevent%20carbon%20monoxide%20poisoning>.



**Short Term Rental Safety, Health and Financial Obligations**

Contact Information	Instructions
<p>Department of Health: 802-863- 7221                  Division of Fire Safety: 802 479-7561</p>	<p>The short term rental operator shall post within the unit a telephone number for the persons responsible for the unit and the contact information for the Vermont Department of Health and the Vermont Division of Fire Safety. This form shall be completed by the short-term rental operator and retained on-site. The form need not be filed with the department.</p>

**SHORT TERM RENTAL OPERATOR INFORMATION**

Operator(s) Name (Print):		Number of Rooms Rented:
Physical 911 Address of Property:		Type of Heating System:
Mailing Address:		Public or Private Water:
Cell phone number:	E- Mail:	Tax Account Number:

**Division of Fire Safety General Checklist ([www.firesafety.vermont.gov](http://www.firesafety.vermont.gov))**

- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are provided in accordance with the attached fire safety info sheet.
- GFI Outlets are provided in locations identified on the attached fire safety info sheet.
- Every sleeping room is provided with a secondary means of escape (see attached fire safety info sheet).
- Heating systems (fuel and wood) have been inspected by a certified fuel service technician (see info sheet).
- Landings, decks, porches and balconies higher than 30 inches from grade are provided with guards and rails.
- Stairs must be provided with graspable handrails (see attached fire safety info sheet).

*Draft*





## Fire Safety Considerations for Short-Term Rental Operators

For detailed information on providing and maintaining a safe short-term rental, please visit our home page [www.firesafety.vermont.gov](http://www.firesafety.vermont.gov)

### Smoke Alarms

- Photoelectric type smoke alarms are required in the immediate vicinity of sleeping rooms, inside each sleeping room, and on all floor levels including the basement. All newly installed smoke alarms must be hard wired into the buildings electrical system.
- Smoke alarms in sleeping rooms of buildings constructed prior to 1994, may be of the 10-year photoelectric lithium powered tamper resistant type.

### Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- Outside each sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms. An additional detector shall be installed in each sleeping room that contains a fuel-burning appliance.
- Carbon Monoxide alarms installed or replaced in a dwelling after July 1, 2005 must be directly wired to the building electrical service and have a battery backup.
- Existing One and Two family dwellings constructed prior to July 1, 2005 may use plug in style alarm with battery backup or battery power or you may hardwire.

### Guard and Handrails

- Landings, decks, porches or platforms more than 30 inches of grade must be provided with guards and intermediate rails spaced no more than 4 inches apart.
- Graspable handrails must be provided on all stairs.

### Electrical Safety:

Ground Fault Current Interrupters (GFCI) are required in the following areas;

- Bathrooms, garages and accessory buildings having a floor located at or below grade level, not intended as a habitable room and limited to storage. Work areas, outdoors, crawl spaces, unfinished portions or areas of the basement not intended as a habitable room. Kitchen, where the receptacles are installed to serve countertop surfaces and sinks and where the receptacles are installed within 6ft from the top inside edge of the bowl of the sink. Boathouses and bathtubs or shower stalls, where receptacles are installed within 6ft of the outside edge of the bathtub or shower stall and laundry areas.

### Secondary Means of Escape from Sleeping Rooms

- Every sleeping room must be provided with a primary and secondary means of escape.
- A window meeting rescue and ventilation requirements can satisfy the secondary means of escape.

### Heating System Safety

- Oil, gas, wood, wood pellet and kerosene fuel fired heating systems shall be cleaned and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's installation instructions and shall be inspected at least once during any 2-year period by a certified fuel service technician or Chimney sweep in the case of solid fuels.

For additional details and information, visit the Code Information & Hot Topic Fire Safety Sheet section of our web page.

<https://firesafety.vermont.gov/buildingcode/codesheets>

45 State Drive Waterbury, VT 05671 . [firesafety.vermont.gov](http://firesafety.vermont.gov) 802-479-7561

August 2018

## **Short Term Rental Ordinance – Pre-existing STR question**

During the 4/22/26 Norwich Selectboard public hearing on the proposed short-term rental (STR) interim ordinance, a resident asked whether existing non-owner occupied STRs would be legal after the ordinance was implemented and how the town would treat these uses going forward.

This document gives some background on this topic for discussion at the May 12, 2026, Planning Commission meeting. It is not a qualified legal opinion.

### **Do non-owner occupied STRs have any grandfathered or pre-existing non-conformance protection?**

This use is not allowed under the current Norwich Zoning Regulations. Illegal uses are not grandfathered and do not turn into pre-existing nonconformances. The definition of a pre-existing non-conformance requires that the use was legal before the adoption of any change in regulations.

This has clear backing in case law, including *City of St. Albans v. Hayford* (2007)

Supreme court affirmation of Hayford:

“A nonconforming use is a "use of land that does not conform to the present bylaws but did conform to all applicable laws, ordinances, and regulations prior to the enactment of the present bylaws." 24 V.S.A. § 4303(15).”

An illegal use remains illegal with all the legal enforcement tools available to the town. The town has flexibility on how it exercises enforcement.

### **Enforcement options for illegal uses**

24 V.S.A. § 4451 – 52

- Notice of violation (issued by the zoning administrator)
- Civil penalties and fines (Selectboard)
- Injunctive relief (Selectboard)

### **Possible evidence sources for STR enforcement**

- Airbnb / VRBO listings
- Booking calendars
- Neighbor complaints
- Parking / turnover patterns

## TOWN OF NORWICH

### INTERIM BYLAWS FOR SHORT TERM RENTAL REGULATIONS

- I. PURPOSE.** The purpose of these bylaws is to provide for regulation of short-term rentals in the Town. Regulating the operation of such facilities are necessary to protect residential neighborhoods, civic, commercial and educational institutions from any adverse secondary impacts associated with Short-Term Rentals and to ensure that such uses operate in a safe manner.
- II. ENACTMENT AND AUTHORITY.** The Town of Norwich has adopted these Interim Bylaws in accordance with and as authorized by the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act, 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, §4415, Interim Bylaws.
- III. DURATION.** These Interim Bylaws will be in effect for a period of two (2) years from the date of their adoption unless they are extended, as authorized by 24 V.S.A. § 4415, or replaced by amendments to the Town of Norwich Land Use Regulations.
- IV. DEFINITIONS.** Words, terms, and phrases specifically defined in the Town of Norwich Land Use Regulations shall have the same meaning in these Interim Bylaws unless another meaning is clearly indicated.
- a. **Short-Term Rental** A furnished house, condominium, or other dwelling room or self-contained dwelling unit rented 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.
- b. **Owner Occupied**  
Owner Occupied shall mean occupancy of the premises by the property owner, as a sole primary residence (domicile) where the owner resides, as declared annually by April 1 for tax purposes.
- [OR]  
Owner Occupied shall mean occupancy of the premises by the property owner, where the subject property is the owner's primary residence, defined as occupancy for at least 183 days per year."
- V. Regulations**  
Short-term rental on an owner-occupied lot is an allowed use in all zoning districts. Property owners shall obtain a permit whenever a dwelling unit is to be used as a short-term rental. Additionally:
- a. The Zoning Administrator may inspect the short-term rental for compliance with Town and state regulations. The short-term rental shall not operate unless it is in full compliance with Town and state regulations.
- b. A short-term rental permit shall be valid for one calendar year, shall expire on December 31 of the year it is in effect, and must be renewed upon expiration as long as the unit is to be continued to be used as a short-term rental.
- c. The short-term rental permit is transferable to a new owner, so long as the new owner registers with the Town, updates the short-term rental permit application and agrees in writing to comply with the

requirements of the short-term rental permit and these regulations within 30 days of sale

## **VI. Permit application requirements.**

An application for (or renewal of) a short-term rental permit shall be submitted to the Town Zoning Administrator. The application/renewal must be completed on the form provided by the Town. It must be accompanied by payment of a permit fee, as determined by the Town Select Board. If relevant circumstances on the property change or for any reason the certification is or becomes inaccurate, a new certification shall be submitted. The application shall provide the following information:

- a. List of all the property owners of the short-term rental including names, residential addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses. Each property owner must also provide the address of their principal residence if it is different from that of the short-term rental. (In the event the property is owned by an entity such a trust or LLC, the ultimate owners and/or beneficiaries of such entity shall provide the information required by this paragraph.)
- b. Completion of a signed affidavit by the property owners certifying the following:
  - The number of sleeping rooms within the short-term rental, as defined in this Section.
  - The number of parking spaces on the property that meet the standard set forth below.
  - The septic capacity of the STR property.
  - Compliance with the following standards:
    - A. The Short-Term Rental Safety, Health and Financial Obligations of the Vermont Departments of Health and Fire Safety [See the Vermont Division of Fire Safety at: [Safety Consideration sort term rentals.pdf \(vermont.gov\)](#)
    - B. All exterior doors shall be operational and all passageways to exterior doors shall be clear and unobstructed.
    - C. Electrical systems shall be serviceable with no visual defects or unsafe conditions.
  - A property map showing the location of buildings, required parking and, if not served by a public sewer, the location of the septic system and leach field. An accurate, suitable plan need not be prepared by a professional.
  - The owner must designate a local (i.e., within 60 minutes by automobile) host and provide the name, address, telephone number and email address of the local host, who shall be responsible, and authorized, to act on the owner's behalf to promptly remedy any violation of these standards or the permit. The host may be the owner, or a local host or agent designated by the owner to serve as a contact person.
  - A declaration of insurance coverage specific to the renting of short-term vacation rentals is required
  - Payment of a fee of \$250.00 which has been set by the Town Selectboard.
- c. **Any Town of Norwich resident that applies for and is granted a short-term rental permit shall provide, on an annual basis, the Town of Norwich Fire Department with written confirmation of the fire safety of the rental unit(s) in question.**

## **VII. Standards.**

All short-term rentals must meet the following standards:

- a. The maximum occupancy for each short-term rental unit shall be the number of people calculated based on two persons per sleeping room (unless the room size is below 100 square feet) plus an additional two persons. In all cases, maximum occupancy must be within the septic capacity of the short-term rental unit. For this purpose, a "sleeping room" is defined as fully enclosed habitable space of at least 70 square feet for one person and 100 square feet for two persons, with an emergency escape or rescue opening.
- b. The property must have sufficient off-street parking spaces to accommodate the maximum

occupancy.

- c. Tenants and guests shall park in the off-street parking spaces.
- d. A house number visible from the street or road shall be maintained.
- e. Provisions shall be made for weekly garbage removal during rental periods. Garbage containers shall be animal proof and always secured with tight-fitting covers to prevent leakage, spilling or odors.
- f. Advertisements for the short-term rental must conform to what is allowed under these regulations and the short-term rental permit.
- g. In the event of a federal, state or local disaster declaration, all owners and guests must comply with federal, state and/or local disaster orders.

### **VIII. Procedure upon filing application**

- a. Upon the filing with the Town Zoning Administrator of the permit application, permit fee, and all documents and information required by this ordinance, the Town Zoning Administrator shall have 30 days to review the application and then either issue the permit, with or without conditions, or notify the applicant in writing that the application has been denied along with the reason or reasons for denial.
- b. The Town Zoning Administrator may decline an application for any of the following reasons:
  - (1) If the application is incomplete, the documentation required by this ordinance was not included with the application or the application or the full permit fee, in payment form acceptable to the Town Treasurer, was not included with the application.
  - (2) If the Town of Norwich issued a short-term rental permit to any of the owners needing to sign the short-term rental permit application and any of such owners had a short-term rental permit revoked within the previous year.
- c. Short-term rental permits issued pursuant to this section shall state the following:
  - The names, addresses and phone numbers of every person or entity who has an ownership interest in the short-term rental property and the host who shall be available during the entire time the short-term rental property is being occupied.
  - The maximum occupancy and vehicle limits for the short-term rental unit.
  - Identification of the number of and location of parking spaces available.
  - A statement that no outdoor fires are allowed, except as permitted by local and state law. Outdoor barbecues and supervised fires in fire pits are permitted.
  - No tents will be allowed as overnight quarters.
  - Any animals which are pets of guests shall not leave the subject parcel except when under control by leash.
  - A statement that the applicant is responsible for compliance with NULR Section 3.10 Performance Standards.
  - A statement that the short-term rental permit may be revoked for violations.

### **IX. Inspection**

The Zoning Administrator may inspect any property before issuing a permit, or at any time thereafter. The Town reserves the right to validate via inspection or otherwise any information contained in the permit application

### **X. Recordkeeping Requirements**

- a. Owners and operators of short-term rentals are required to keep written (including electronic) records of advertising information and rental activity (i.e., number of bookings, name of booking guest, number of people, length of stay, amount collected, amount of tax collected or remitted) for a minimum of three years.
- b. In the event of a dispute with the owner(s) of a short-term rental as to the need for a permit or as to compliance with this ordinance, the Zoning Administrator shall have the right to inspect the written records upon reasonable notice

**XI. Expiration**

This ordinance will expire in two years after its initial adoption to allow for a period of data gathering and analysis. Upon expiration of this ordinance, the Selectboard will revisit the issue of STRs and adopt a new ordinance to replace this one.

## **Norwich Planning Commission Meeting**

**02/10/2026**

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

*Public Present:* Linda Gray, Kimo Griggs, Jeff Lubell, Susan Barrett, Matt Swett, Amy Stringer

### **1. Open Meeting at 6:31pm**

### **2. Approve Agenda**

*Goodrich moved, seconded by Ciccotelli, to approve the agenda with modifications.*

***Motion passed 5-0***

### **3. Public Comment not on Agenda**

N/A

### **4. Correspondence on items not on the agenda**

### **5. Short Term Rental**

The group received feedback from VLCT stating that "owner-occupied" is a standard term and there is no need to further define it.

Discussion noted that existing STRs cannot be compelled to participate in registration.

*Spalding moved, seconded by Ciccotelli, to approve changes to STR regulations, including the removal of the "owner-occupied" definition.*

***Motion passed 4-0; Goodrich abstained***

### **6. Tier 1b Opt-in**

The group discussed the opt-in option regarding Tier 1B designation for the Village Center and Village Area.

Lubell highlighted that the designation creates an exemption from Act 250 for residential projects of 10-50 units on 10 or fewer acres. This type of project can utilize the 2x density bonus if some of the units are affordable housing that already in the regulations.

Linda Gray and Susan Barrett expressed support for the designation to promote diverse housing.

Gorman expressed via email non-support, citing no advantage to the designation and expressed concerns that units would not be affordable.

*Spalding moved, seconded by Goodrich, for the PC to recommend the Selectboard adopt the Tier 1B designation.*

**Motion passed; Motion passed 5-0**

The Selectboard meeting should have this item on the agenda for the 2/25/26 meeting and a TRORC representative is planning to attend.

**7. Bike Ped Scoping Grant (Rte 5 South)**

Zoning Administrator True reviewed past scoping studies (2002, 2012, 2017) regarding the route from the Dothan Brooke School path to 10A and stated that there is a need to revisit.

The scoping study would analyze existing infrastructure and generate multiple options with budgets and route plans. This is a federal grant with a 20% match from the town. Discussion touched on right-of-way issues, environmental safety, and neighborhood impacts.

Gorman commented via email in opposition to more costly capital projects

*Goodrich moved, seconded by Ciccotelli, to authorize the Chair to provide notice to the Selectboard the Planning Commission's intention to take the lead on the Scoping Study proposal.*

**Motion passed 5-0**

**8. Planning Director report**

**a) USGS/FEMA & Hazard Planning**

New higher-accuracy USGS/FEMA models show significant changes to the flood plain on the Flood Hazard Maps. USGS/FEMA will notify affected landowners. USGS/FEMA has requested local review of the map during the comment period to address any obvious errors.

**b) Local Hazard Mitigation Plan**

The current Local Hazard Mitigation Plan expires at the end of the month. This is needed to receive FEMA funds. True will work with a steering committee to update the plan over the next couple months and present to the Selectboard.

**c) Energy Work Group**

The group met on 1/14 to discuss the roadmap for the Enhanced Energy Plan.

**9. Letter of support for Upper Valley Agricultural Association (Norwich Farmer's Market)**

The group discussed the draft letter of support of the Upper Valley Agricultural Association's application for a Catalyst Grant.

*Goodrich moved, seconded by Ciccotelli, to authorize the Chair to sign the letter of support for the Upper Valley Agricultural Association to the Northern Border Regional Commission.*

***Motion passed 4-0; Goodrich abstained.***

**10. Approve minutes from January 9th and January 26th, 2025**

*Goodrich moved, seconded by Christian, to approve the minutes from 1/9/26 and 1/26/26*

***Motion passed 4-0; Goodrich abstained.***

**11. Adjourn**

*Crow moved, seconded by Goodrich, to adjourn at 8:03 pm*

***Motion passed 5-0.***

**Future Regular Meeting – 3/10/26 at 6:30 pm at Tracy Hall (also accessible via Zoom)**

Minutes by Vince Crow on 2/12/25

## **Norwich Planning Commission Meeting**

**4/14/2026**

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

*Others Present:* Stephen True (Zoning Administrator), Lisa Talmadge, Susan Barrett, Marsha Price, Jeff Lubell, Anne Hill, Kata Sasvan, Karen Trombley

**1. Open Meeting at 6:32pm**

**2. Approve Agenda**

*Spalding moved, seconded by Goodrich, to approve the agenda*

*Motion passed 7-0*

**3. Public Comment not on Agenda**

N/A

**4. Correspondence on items not on the agenda**

N/A

**5. Chair's Report**

The Chair stated that the next Select Board meeting on 4/22/26 will discuss the short term rental regulations.

**6. Affordable Housing Revolving Fund - Starlake Application of Funds**

The group discussed the AHSC recommendation to approve the application from the Starlake Housing Trust and Twin Pines for funding from the Affordable Housing Revolving Fund. The request is to “cover accrued capital needs related to the community water and wastewater system.”

Lisa Talmadge, Susan Barrett, Marsha Price, Anne Hill, Kata Sasvan all spoke in support of the approval of the application. They discussed the current state of the water system and explained that they are on the verge of failure.

The Affordable Housing Revolving Fund was established in 2018 to fund new projects and has not been used. The group had consensus that the policy should be revised to add flexibility to include projects maintaining affordability in addition to projects creating new units.

*Goodrich moved, seconded by Pape, to recommend to the Select Board to approve the application from the Starlake Housing Trust and Twin Pines for funding from the Affordable Housing Revolving Fund in the form of a loan up to the full amount, as well as revising the policy related to the funding in order to increase flexibility for qualifying projects.*

***Motion passed 7-0***

**7. Village Master Plan -Steering Committee**

The group discussed the selection process for members of the Village Master Plan Steering Committee. The PC will have a special meeting on 4/28/26 to agree on the workplan outline for the steering committee as well as the procedure for selecting members.

**8. Housing Chapter Delegation**

The group had consensus to delegate to the AHSC to create a draft of the updated Housing Chapter of the Town Plan. This will be discussed in future meetings and the PC will continue to update the draft.

**9. Current Planning Commission Bylaw Revision**

The discussion for Bylaw revisions will be set as a future agenda item

**10. Approve Minutes from 3/10/26**

*Spalding moved, seconded by Crow, to approve the minutes from 3/10/26*

***Motion passed 6-0 (Goodrich Abstained)***

**11. Adjourn**

*Spalding moved, seconded by Goodrich, to adjourn at 8:35 pm*

***Motion passed 7-0.***

**Future Regular Meeting –5/12/26 at 6:30 pm at Tracy Hall (also accessible via Zoom)**

Minutes by Vince Crow on 4/17/26

## **SPECIAL MEETING Norwich Planning Commission Meeting**

**4/28/2026**

*Members Present:* Ernie Ciccotelli, Jaan Laaspere, Christian Spalding, Bob Pape, Mary Gorman

*Others Present:* Steven True (Zoning Administrator)

### **1. Open Meeting at 6:32pm**

### **2. Approve Agenda**

*Gorman moved, seconded by Ciccotelli, to approve the agenda*

***Motion passed 5-0***

### **3. Correspondence on items not on the agenda**

True informed members that he and the Town Manager have published a survey intended to collect public comment on the Town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan which is currently being updated. True asked members to spread the word.

### **4. Village Master Plan -Steering Committee**

Members discussed the current work plan and reviewed members' comments on the work plan. The group had consensus on several changes to the content. Jaan to update the document accordingly.

Members discussed the current project summary, reviewing comments. Jaan to update the document.

The group discussed potential members of the Village Master Plan Steering Committee, settling on a list. Jaan and Steven to follow-up with those candidates who haven't already been contacted.

Jaan and Steven to prepare the summary, work plan and the list of steering committee members in advance of the upcoming Select Board meeting on the 12th of May.

### **5. Adjourn**

*Spalding moved, seconded by Gorman to adjourn at 8:00 pm*

***Motion passed 5-0.***

Minutes by Steven True on 05/01/2026