

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Minutes of March 6, 2024**

**6:30 pm at Brown Public Library Community Room  
(also available remotely via Town GoToMeeting account)**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chair Steve Fitzhugh.

**Roll Call:** Present for the meeting were Planning Commission members Steve Fitzhugh, Julie Lappin, Steve Davis and Royal DeLegge. Clerk Mitch Osiecki was also present.

All participants attended in person at the Community Room, except Royal DeLegge, who participated remotely via GoToMeeting.

**Zoning Regulations**

Steve Fitzhugh made brief remarks summarizing the Select Board’s Public Hearing on the proposed Zoning Regulation revisions held on Feb 13. Following the Public Hearing, the Select Board held its regular Select Board meeting, and some members made additional comments on the proposed regulation at that time.

The most consequential takeaway from the Public Hearing and Select Board discussion was that the Select Board wants the minimum lot size and minimum road frontage requirements to be maintained as they are described in the current regulations (that is, 5-acre minimum lot size and minimum road frontage of 200 feet).

Board members John Stevens and Charlie Morse had a few additional questions and comments, which will be discussed shortly.

Discussion of comments of Select Board members Morse and Stevens.

*Comments from Charlie Morse:*

1. Suggested adding language to the effect that, “if you need help understanding how to amend or repeal a bylaw, management and staff will provide assistance.”

Response: Vermont statutes 24 VSA §4441 and §4442, cited in this section, explain the procedure for amending or repealing a regulation. Office staff, specifically the Zoning Administrator, can help with this upon request.

2. Typo – Table of Contents indicates Certificate of Occupancy can be found on page 96, but it is on page 97.

Response: that was a typo and has been corrected.

3. Suggested adding language to the effect that specific dimensions for each zoning district will be found in the following section, “Dimensional Standards.”

Response: PC does not believe that the readability of this section is improved by adding a reference to another section of the regulations.

4. Suggested that the list of Zoning Districts be amended to include a district for Town Forest or Conservation, including Recreational Use.

Response: PC will add this language once it determines how to establish the proposed new district.

5. Noted a Table B in Section 4, but no Table A.

Response: There is a Table A on page 6.

6. Does not support a broad change of minimum lot size from five acres to two acres across the entire Low Density Residential district.

Response: The regulations will revert to existing zoning standards (minimum lot size of five acres and minimum road frontage of 200 feet) in the Low Density Residential district.

7. Suggested revising the language regulating fences near an intersection be revised to read, “No wall, fence, or shrubbery shall be erected, planted, or maintained on or near a road that that interferes with traffic visibility or within 30 feet of an intersection.”

Response: PC believes the current language conveys intent of the regulation.

8. Suggested that regulation of retaining walls be restricted to within Northfield and Northfield Falls villages, and the corridors connecting those two areas. Doesn't feel it's practical to regulate retaining walls in the Low Density Residential district.

Response: PC that in the Low Density Residential district, retaining walls within 20 feet of a property line should still be regulated.

Comments from John Stevens:

1. Suggested that Section 2.10.4 be amended to specify that documents submitted electronically must be provided as PDF files.

Response: Agreed, we will specify PDF files.

2. Asked if Section 2.6.7 should also apply to manufactured homes as well.

Response: Section 2.6.7 addresses a state statute. No revision is needed.

3. Commented that a provision in Section 2.11.2 requiring screening of snow storage is unreasonable.

Response: PC will amend this language to remove reference to "snow storage."

4. Asked whether zoning regulations prohibit manufactured homes in certain neighborhoods.

Response: No, state law does not allow that practice.

5. Noted that the reference to the definition of a "neighborhood" in Section 2.12.3 is cited incorrectly.

6. Response: That was a typo and has been corrected.

7. Noted an incorrect spelling of "principle" on page 56.

Response: That was also a typo and has been corrected.

8. Noted an inconsistency between standards cited in Section 5.8.2 and Table C.

Response: The inconsistency has been corrected.

9. Asked about the reference to an "all-weather walkway" on page 65.

Response: The intent is not to mandate a sidewalk, but to ensure the preservation of a pedestrian right-of-way.

10. Noted that the required lot size for two dwelling units is greater than for a lot and accessory building in the High Density Residential district.

Response: The PC discussed this but concluded that the proposed language does seem to present an inconsistency.

11. Noted concern about regulation of signage for a Home Occupation.

Response: The PC discussed this and agreed that the name of a Home Occupation on a mailbox would not constitute a violation of sign regulations. However, a separate sign hanging from a mailbox would be considered a sign and thus be subject to zoning regulations.

12. Asked whether Section 5.10.2 (F) would allow the Town to operate a crushing operation within 100 feet of a property line.

Response: The proposed regulation would apply to a new operation, or the expansion of an existing operation. An existing facility will be able to operate as it currently does.

13. Noted an inconsistency in seating capacity between Table C and Table D.

Response: PC discussed and will revise regulations to ensure consistency.

14. Suggested that definitions are needed for Modular homes, Impervious surfaces, and pervious surfaces.

Response: The PC discussed each of these and does not feel definitions for these terms are merited.

15. Noted that the Zoning Map uses white as the default color for the Low Density Residential district, which is confusing.

Response: PC agrees and we will get the color changed to an unambiguous hue.

16. Asked about a fee for a Certificate of Occupancy.

Response: Fees are typically listed in a fee schedule independent of the zoning regulations. We do not anticipate charging a fee for the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, other than the required document recording fee.

The Planning Commission will convene a Special Meeting to review and approve changes once the draft zoning regulations have been revised as discussed here.

**Motion:** Steve Davis moved to warn another Public Hearing on the proposed zoning regulations for Wednesday, April 3 (the date of the next regular meeting of the Planning Commission. Julie Lappin seconded.

**Vote to Approve: 4-0.**

**Approval of Minutes**

Approval of minutes of Feb 7 meeting was tabled.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, Apr 3 at 6:30 pm.

**Adjournment:** Steve Davis moved to adjourn; Julie Lappin seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.