

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of June 1, 2022

The meeting was held at the Community Room of the Brown Public Library, and was also streamed via the Town GoToMeeting account for the benefit of those unable to attend in person.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by Chair Hill-Eubanks.

Roll Call: Present for the meeting were Commissioners Laura Hill-Eubanks, Nancy Peck, Ruth Ruttenberg, Aaron Rhodes and Chandra Blackmer, all attending remotely. Clerk Mitch Osiecki hosted the meeting from the Community Room. Also present remotely were Clare Rock (CVRPC), Sam Lash (CVRPC), and JuliBeth Hinds (Birchline Planning).

Set/Adjust Agenda: None.

Public Participation: None.

Laura welcomed guests to the meeting and led a round of introductions.

New Business: Regional Planning Commission

Clare Rock made brief remarks, explaining the role of the CV Regional Planning Commission in supporting municipal Planning Commissions.

Laura briefly recapped the work of the PC to this point with respect to their work on zoning regulation updates, including outreach to a number of town boards and committees that have interest in zoning bylaws.

The PC has reached the point in this work where it seemed prudent to engage the services of a planning professional to shepherd this work to completion in an efficient manner.

Clare discussed services provided by CVRPC, such as: outreach and education services to member towns; maintenance of a Regional Plan (analogous to town plans); work on municipal designations (e.g., village centers); transportation projects; hazard mitigation plans; coordination of projects along the Winooski River basin.

CVRPC also assists with redevelopment of areas impacted by brownfields. Also provides GIS services to member towns.

Clare turned over to Sam Lash, who talked about the works she supports, which largely focuses on support of climate and energy planning goals.

Sam has been looking into what's going on both at the state level, as well as locally within several member towns. Sam tries to support all manner of town projects: energy fairs; surveys; renewable energy projects. Can also assist municipalities with Enhanced Energy Plans and community education projects.

A Municipal Energy Resiliency Program is also in the works.

Also supports investment-level audit of municipal buildings. Such audits could lay the groundwork for grant projects to support municipal building renovation projects.

Laura discussed potential projects that might be pursued in Northfield: park & ride on Route 12; vehicle charging stations; sidewalk in Northfield Falls.

Also briefly discussed was the possibility of expanding the boundary of the village center.

Julie Beth mentioned that updating the current Flood Hazard regulations is of high importance.

Clare added that Northfield's current Hazard Mitigation Plan is expiring soon and will need to be updated. The PC has not been involved in this thus far.

Mitch briefly discussed the topic of Certificates of Occupancy. Northfield has not issued these documents in the past, which has consequences with respect to enforcing compliance with Efficiency Vermont's Energy Certification standards for residential and commercial buildings. Should discuss in more detail whether the PC would like to adopt this practice. Will have to win over the Select Board.

Laura discussed Northfield Falls' lack of sewer services and the challenges to both commercial development and increase density of residential development due to the lack of sewer services.

Laura thanks Clare and Sam for their time. Both departed the meeting at 7:50.

Zoning Regulation Updates:

Julie Beth has put together a presentation for the Select Board describing her proposed redesign of the zoning bylaws. Current draft of that outline was shared with the PC.

PC and DRB Operating Procedures are currently included in the zoning bylaws. State law does not require this. Including these procedures in zoning bylaws makes it somewhat complicated to amend.

Julie Beth recommends removing Operating Procedures from the zoning bylaws and having the Select Board adopt them instead as policies.

Nancy Peck supports zoning bylaws being updated to require the issuance of Certificates of Occupancy.

Discussion of General Development Standards.

Mitch suggested adding a requirement for subdivision sketch plan review that requires a sketch plan to show contour lines (perhaps 10-foot intervals). Would assist the DRB in determining appropriate building envelope for future development.

Tentative plans are to share this zoning bylaw reorganization with the Select Board at their meeting on June 14. Julie Beth will attend the meeting remotely. PC members are invited to attend if they wish.

Ruth Ruttenberg asked whether any PC members would be interested in attending ongoing meetings about potential uses of ARPA funds. Laura will discuss with Merry Shernock.

Julie Beth discussed lack of sewer service in Northfield Falls. Would need to get on the agendas of a couple of bodies. One challenge that municipalities are experiencing right now is a shortage of professional engineering services. They are much in demand.

Julie Beth departed the meeting at 8:35 pm.

Approval of Minutes: Nancy moved to approve minutes of May 11; Aaron seconded.
Motion passed, 5-0.

Next Regular Meeting: July 6, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment: Aaron moved to adjourn; Chandra seconded. **Motion passed, 5-0.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm.