

# TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT

## PLANNING COMMISSION

### Minutes of May 3, 2023

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm by Chair Stephen Fitzhugh.

**Roll Call:** Present for the meeting were Planning Commission members Julie Lappin, Royal DeLegge, and Stephen Fitzhugh. Steve Davis was absent. Also present: Clerk Mitch Osiecki and Juli Beth Hinds of Birchline Planning.

All participants were in attendance at the Community Room, except Juli Beth Hinds, who participated remotely via GoToMeeting.

**Adjustments to Agenda:** None.

#### **Zoning Regulations**

Juli Beth Hinds led a discussion of the further revisions to the town's zoning regulations. Juli Beth has been working to finalize the definitions included in the regulations. Juli Beth noted that there are several uses that are allowed, but which are not defined, which will inevitably lead to difficulty in applying our regulations as intended. Conversely, she noted that defining uses that are not allowed could result in the regulations reading as though they are overly restrictive.

Following are the items that have been added or redefined, with explanatory comments where appropriate:

- Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) – updated for consistency with state statute.  
Adaptive Reuse – new, and helpful when trying to preserve viability of older structures.
- Agricultural – exempt by state statute.
- Animal Boarding – changed to Animal Services.  
Services is more comprehensive. Kennels and veterinary services are defined separately (can also add a definition for grooming). It might be a good idea to separate grooming.
- Artist Gallery or Studio – a studio is neither a retail nor a commercial space;  
(We might consider adding “accessory retail” in the Mixed Use/Industrial Districts. Could, for example, allow Darn Tough do sell goods).
- Assisted Living Facility – Added; will have to think about districts where they make sense.
- Bar – added to this a definition of a brewpub. A brewpub is often defined as producing less than 15,000 barrels per year and includes on-premises retail sales (often specifying that at least 25% of annual production is sold on premises). Should research what makes sense in Northfield.
- Bed & Breakfast – current definition is OK; PC will have to consider which districts might be appropriate.
- Cemetery – newly defined.
- Certificate of Occupancy -- currently required only for construction within the Flood Hazard Area.

- Change of Use – Northfield had not previously defined change of use, but often needed.
- Childcare Facility – definition updated to comply with state statute.
- Commercial Forestry Operation – new definition for a practice not currently allowed (should consider allowing, where appropriate). See 12 V.S.A. §5756 for more information).
- Commercial School (Instructional Facility) – not currently allowed, but it might be a good idea. Consider districts where such use might be appropriate. After discussion, prefer “instructional facility.”
- Community Center – currently defined but not allowed. Might be appropriate in all districts except low- and medium-density residential.
- Community Garden – new definition for a use not currently allowed. Could allow broadly if parking is not an issue.
- Conditional Use – new definition, conforming to state statute.
- Cultural Facility – new definition. Some overlap with a community center. Might be appropriate in Village Center and Institutional districts.
- Co-working spaces – could fold into definition of office space.
- Dwellings – new definitions added (one-, two-, three-, and four-unit dwellings; five units and up are multi-family dwellings). For future discussion: the number of units to allow as “permitted” and/or “conditional use” in various districts.
- Educational Institutions – new definitions.
- Essential Service – new definition (utilities differ from essential services).
- Family – evolving definition.
- Family Childcare Home – added a definition that conforms to state statute.
- Farmer’s Market – new definition. We might consider requiring a site plan review. (Might consider allowing in Village Cener, Industrial, Mixed Use, and Institutional districts).
- Food or beverage manufacturing – new definition.
- Funeral Home – should also allow cremation services. Consider appropriate districts. Could “green burials” be added? Best to have a more in-depth discussion before proceeding.
- Government Buildings – new definition.
- Group Living Accommodations – new definition. Make sure our definition covers a use like the Veteran’s Place.
- Junkyard – defined by state statute and not allowed.
- Kennel – removed (replaced by Animal Services).
- Light Manufacturing – new definition.
- Lot – several new definitions.
- Manufacturing – new definition.
- Mixed Use – new definition.
- Modular Homes – new definition.
- Outdoor Recreation Facility – new definitions (public vs. private).
- Outdoor Recreation – currently makes no distinction between public/private. Should cover whether permanent structures (also incidental or minimal structures are allowed), Should require conditional use review if it is a major facility.

- Parking space – new definition.
- Patio – new definition.
- Personal Services or Service Establishment – new definition. Either term works.
- Professional Office – just Office (and includes co-working spaces).
- Recreational Vehicle – could be a useful term to have defined.
- Restaurant – was not defined.
- Storage - -new definition.
- Story (building) – new definition.
- Street – new definition.
- Structural Alteration – new definition.
- Substantial Completion – new definition.
- Theater – new definition.
- Vehicle Repair Service – new definition.
- Veterinary Office – replaced by Animal Services.
- Zoning Permit – new definition.

Juli Beth is also working on adding a Table of Uses to the regulations. Hopes to provide a revised draft shortly – in advance of next meeting.

Juli Beth departed at 8:57 pm.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Minutes of March 8: Julie Lappin moved to approve; Royal DeLegge seconded. **Motion carried, 3-0-1** (Blake Pierson abstained).

Minutes of April 5: Tabled until next meeting. Lack of quorum.

Minutes of April 20: Blake Pierson moved to approve; Julie Lappin seconded. **Motion carried, 4-0.**

**ZA Update:** Mitch provided brief update of ongoing zoning activity.

**CVRPC Update:**

Royal gave a brief update on his first meeting with the CVRPC. He's been added to the Water Quality Committee.

**Next Meeting:**

- June 7, 6:30 pm at Community Room

**Adjournment:** Julie Lappin moved to adjourn; Blake Pierson seconded.

**Motion carried, 4-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.