

TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Minutes for March 19, 2018 Meeting
Approved on April 2, 2018

Commission/Board Members Present: Koi Boynton, Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen and Mark Letorney.

Commission/Board Members Absent: Wendy Doane.

Also present: Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator), Eric Law and Margaret Nichols.

The meeting began at 6:40 p.m.

Amendments to Agenda

No amendments were proposed.

Meeting with Eric Law, USDA Community Program Specialist

Eric began by saying municipal wastewater funding will never be better than right now. He noted that while overall Westford would not be eligible for grants due to its high median household income (MHI), if the focus was narrowed to the service area the MHI might be lower. He said the way to determine this would be to hire RCAP to conduct an income survey of the service area. He noted this may be beneficial because the MHI is typically lower in villages. He also said there is an additional benefit as the user rate for post construction costs cannot be more than 1-2% of the MHI. In order to meet post construction rate limits the USDA can extend loan repayment, reduce interest rates and may even include grant funds. He said the MHI must be below \$55,000 to be eligible for grants and if the MHI is below \$45,000 more options are available. Eric believes the town needs to 1) conduct an income study – \$1,000 range, 2) formalize the feasibility study - \$10,000 range and 3) conduct a preliminary engineering report - \$55,000 range. Eric said some of the funding sources available are 1) USDA Rural Development, 2) Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund 3) Capital Budget Planning Advance 4) ACCD Planning Advance. Eric stated there are three reasons that the town should pursue funding now. Those are 1) the cost of inflation (e.g. labor and materials) is only going to increase, 2) interest rates are at the lowest we are likely to see in our lifetime and 3) 2019 federal funding is questionable. Eric noted that the next application deadline is December of 2018 and the town would need to have an income study, feasibility study and draft PE in order to apply. He added that the turnaround for a PE is between 120-180 days. Lastly, he noted that the USDA is currently using the MHI from the 2010 census and in October of this year 2015 data will be used, which could positively impact Westford. Seth asked if the USDA would take into consideration reserved capacity for low to moderate priced housing for affordable, stepdown and age in place housing. Eric said it's informally considered when reviewing applications.

Westford Land Use & Development Public Hearing

The Planning Commission opened the public hearing.

Melissa stated she has a few items to discuss with the Planning Commission. Those items were as follows:

- 1) It was recently brought to her attention that our wetland definition is outdated and should reference the Vermont Wetlands Rules;
- 2) The 20 acre deferred development lot minimum requirement seems excessive in almost all districts and is contradictory to the Commission's intent of preserving working lands and promoting condensed development. The Commission decided to return to the previous requirement of 150% of the minimum lot size for a district;
- 3) Melissa reviewed the Vermont Floodplain Manager's comments on the Flood Hazard Overlay with the Commission and the Commission made a number of revisions. The Commission asked that Melissa to further discuss road work requirements with the Floodplain Manager.
- 4) Finally, Melissa read a letter from Barb Peck which she submitted as public comment. The Commission agreed the R5 planning and design standards should be reviewed again and stated they would place review in the next round of regulatory amendments.

Mark MOVED to continue the hearing until April 2nd at 6:30pm.

Mark SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 4-0.

Draft Mobile Food Vendors Ordinance

The Planning Commission will discuss the Selectboard's initial comments about the draft ordinance at their next meeting.

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements & Other Business

Reserve Request Update

Melissa noted that the voters' approved of the Planning Commission's reserve account request at Town Meeting.

Neighborhood Development Area & Rural Development Caucus Update / Community

Melissa noted that she is waiting to hear back from Faith from the ACCD to set a meeting date in April.

Wastewater Scenario Analysis Update

The Planning Commission decided to hire Green Mountain Engineering to develop a cost estimate for a phased community wastewater system located on the Jackson Farmland to serve specific uses around the Town Common.

2018 Planning Commission Work Plan

The Planning Commission reviewed their work plan. They will discuss wastewater planning, the food vendors ordinance and revised regulations at their next meeting. (See 2018 Planning Commission Work Plan for specifics).

Minutes of the January 15, 2018 Meeting

Koi MOVED to approve the minutes as amended.

Mark SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 4-0.

Minutes of the February 26, 2018 Meeting

Koi MOVED to approve the minutes as amended.

Seth SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 3-0.

Gordon abstained.

Minutes of the March 6, 2018 Meeting

The Planning Commission will review these minutes at their next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:47 p.m.

Submitted by,

Melissa Manka, Westford Planning Coordinator