

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 15, 2021 MEETING**

Approved on March 2, 2021.

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

Also, Present Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator)

The meeting began at: 6:34pm

Amendments to Agenda: Melissa's discussion with Liz Curry, CCRPC's review of the Town Plan

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements, Correspondence & Other Business: None

Minutes of February 1, 2021

VOTE: Gordon makes a motion to move the minutes.

Discussion on word choice for WLUD example of nonconforming use vs. nonconforming structure.

George seconds the motion as amended.

The vote passed: 5 to 0.

1705 Rte. 128 Property - Ph 2 Environmental Site Assessment Supplemental Report & Next Steps: LE Environmental has submitted the report to the property owner's insurance company and CCRPC.

1705 Rte. 128 Property -Archeological Resources Assessment & Architectural

Resource Inventory Reports & Next Steps: The archeological assessment has identified that anything that is currently developed will not need further archeological work. Anything unturned will need a phase 1B assessment – which means 1.5' deep test pits at set intervals. If artifacts are found it would go to phase 2 and require more investigation and mitigation. It is recommended to only focus development in the parking lot and garage area and avoid the slope and back field. Both the house and the garage were identified as historic structures. For both structures, we will need to work with Historic Preservation on next steps. For the house it would be good to leave it but gain clarity on whether or not the interior can be changed and if adaptive reuse is an option. Also, clearly defining if there are limitations for a new private owner if federal funds are used for early stages of the project. The garage will need to come down in order to develop the property. If historic photos are taken prior to the removal and the history is written up, removing the garage shouldn't be a problem. This documentation would likely cost \$2,000. A phase 1B archeological assessment would be between \$3,000 and \$5,000, depending on how much of the area is proposed to be disturbed in the site plan. We need to contact Historic Preservation early to ensure that they understand the project and they can become a part of the process.

Phase 2 of the Brownfield's assessment might impact the archeological assessment work. The mitigation to correct the bloom could be to cap the toe of the slope and remove the garage. If this is the case, Brownfield's funding could pay for the historic documentation of the garage and the phase 1B assessment. It would be interesting to learn if passive revegetation or work to stabilize the riverbank would require more archeological work. We need to ensure that we meet requirements but also need to limit costs. Melissa, Mark, and George are meeting with Taylor to discuss next steps for the VDCP grant. They will also determine a plan for working with Historic Preservation. We will need the Brownfield's report before engaging Historic Preservation.

1705 Rte. 128 Property - VDCP Planning Grant: Taylor should have a RFQ ready for review in March. The conditions for the VDCP grant are being checked off. There is a fair housing training for town staff that is held up, but it will likely happen in April and VDCP is aware that this is an issue on the state end not the town. There was discussion regarding amending the scope of work or budget. It was discussed that the River Conservancy might cover the commercial appraisal, but they did want to wait for the Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment before moving forward. Currently, the appraisal is in the VDCP budget. There are concerns regarding the potential cost of further archeological work, this will not need to be addressed until after the site plan, so it will not impact the VDCP budget. Stormwater work will need to happen and if it impacts the lawn next to the house or the toe of the slope, archeological testing costs could fold into that stormwater work.

Town Center Community Wastewater Project - Step 1 Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) & Next Steps: The PER has been submitted. The environmental has not been submitted. This shouldn't be too much of an issue because the PER is going to take the state some time. Melissa and the consultants met with the state in January. The new state staff was concerned about not doing the hydro study in Step 1. The state suggested amending the PER but that would slow down the process and cost an additional \$30,000. The Commissioners discussed that the town worked with prior state staff and our consultants to move the hydro to Step 2 because of the need to minimize financial impacts and the Step 2 funding provides 100% loan forgiveness. Melissa will set up another meeting with the state for March to ensure that the state feels connected to the process and understands why we shifted the hydro to Step 2. Melissa will develop a memo with what will go into the Step 2. Hydro and pretreatment will be in Step 2 as well as a user survey. Archeological assessment was discussed - 1B archeological might be necessary for some users' front yards. The piping will not if we keep it in the right of way. Seth mentioned that USDA infrastructure has a way to deal with archeological in soil-based systems. The line of credit status was discussed. Greg has drafted a letter to send to local banks. This letter will allow him to start a dialogue and explore line of credit options. George will check in with Greg on the status of this letter. At this point it is not believed that we will need ACT 250 review. This might change if the lines going out trigger ACT 250. We should work with the state early to get written jurisdictional opinion. Current use penalties need to be determined as well and work with the state early to identify areas that might be impacted by current use.

Town Center Community Wastewater Project - Northern Borders Regional

Commission Economic & Infrastructure Development Investment Program: The PC had previously discussed applying for a Northern Borders Grant this spring. The funding strategy was to address the affordable housing and economic development aspects of the Village Revitalization project. At this time, it does not appear that we are ready to move forward with this application. Northern Borders likes to see a bond vote to demonstrate project support as well as 50% match confirmation (80% can be federal). We will be competitive in 2022, but not now. At this time, our efforts should be focused on what our main sources of funding are and our outreach to the town residents. A conversation regarding a bond vote and community engagement took place. When should the bond vote happen? It is in agreement that a bond vote needs to happen before Step 3, but could it happen before Step 2. What do we want in hand for a bond vote? We need to provide a very clear picture of Village Revitalization for the town and we need to be close to the end of the town lands loan term. We need examples of connection contracts, user fees, and maintenance costs. We need to know if the wastewater system has pretreatment or is conventional. We need engagement from potential users and possibly some larger properties committed to purchasing capacity. It seems that Step 2 is what will give us everything we need to engage community and hold a bond vote. There was discussion regarding the need to engage those that are within the connection area now. Melissa will talk with the consultants to determine how best to engage the community and what a graduated outreach plan looks like.

Town Center Community Wastewater Project - Project Based Tax Increment

Financing Legislation: Seth testified last week. The TIF bill is in Senate Economic Development committee and will soon be moving to the House committees (Ways & Means and Appropriations). Currently, there is a \$1.5 million cap. There is a push for no cap. There is also discussion around what a project is. Seth gained some insight around the challenges of communicating economic benefit of TIFs, regarding how tax auditors look at growth in the entire county and not individual towns. The House Ways & Means committee could be the challenge for the TIF. Mark will talk with Martha Heath to see if she can check in with those committee members and relay the impact this bill will have on our small, rural communities.

Newsletter/FPF Article: George has a draft for the newsletter that he will get to Nanette. Gordon had 2 comments on the article that George will work on and send to Nanette.

2020 Work Plan: February 25th Selectboard Town Plan hearing has been warned. George and Gordon will attend. CCRPC's PAC review of the town plan went well. The CCRPC staff had no issues with the plan. There was a comment regarding updating the census data and including broadband and need for access. Melissa will work on revising those components. Melissa will cc the PC on those edits.

March 2nd meeting will focus on WLUDR amendments and adoption timeline ONLY!

Later in March we will need to vote on PC roles again. This is an annual process after Town Meeting Day.

Melissa's Discussion with Liz Curry: If we are not applying for Northern Borders this year, what should Liz be working on? Liz should work on exploring Small Grants for Smart Growth. She could also work on pulling together pieces of the Northern Borders grant for the next application round. The application does not change much from year to year and this will be preparing us for the next round. She could also investigate Certified Local Government Requirements if applying for that would be beneficial to the town. There was discussion regarding that Liz's time should go towards town work so we could explore the library and other parts of town but should not loan Liz's time for other non-town community groups and organizations.

Meeting adjourned 9:05pm