

**TOWN OF WESTFORD PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES FOR JUNE 16, 2025, MEETING
APPROVED ON JULY 21, 2025**

Commissioners Present: Ian Gehlbach, Max Tyler, Will Dunkley, George Lamphere, Mo Reilly

Commissioners Absent: None.

Also Present: Harmony Cism (Planning Assistant, Zoning Administrator), Maria Barden (Minute Clerk), Barb Peck, Sheila Franz, Lori Johnson

The meeting began at: 6:30pm. M. Tyler reviewed the Rules of Procedure.

Amendments to Agenda

M. Tyler suggested covering correspondence when reviewing the minutes. No other changes.

Citizens to be Heard-Items not on agenda: None.

Minutes of May 13th & May 19th Meetings-Review and approval

M. Tyler made a motion to approve the May 13th joint SB/PC minutes as amended by the SB. **G. Lamphere** seconded, *motion passed 4-0*.

M. Tyler discussed correspondence related to the May 19th minutes, the SB discussed this at their last meeting as well.

The Planning Commission discussed what level of detail they would like in the minutes going forward. They discussed the possibility of not quoting/adding direct quotes or names of residents when transcribing the minutes. They discussed having the public reach out to the Planning Commission directly with feedback and any questions or potential edits to the minutes. Potential use of the AI function in Zoom was brought up. The Planning Commission expressed their gratitude to all the minute clerks employed by the Town.

G. Lamphere proposed the following: Keep the first paragraph (in the section up for discussion), strike conversation related to B. Peck, G. Lamphere, B. Peck, L. Johnson, and state that the commission reviewed and discussed the rules of procedure as presented and public comment was given.

M. Tyler made a motion to approve the May 19th minutes as amended by **G. Lamphere**. **G. Lamphere** seconded, *motion passed 4-0*.

Land Use & Development Regulations Updates

Campgrounds: **M. Tyler** visited the Czapski camp last week. He thanked them for being accommodating. He said they'd done their campsites well, but they had a few issues with the process they went through with the DRB. **M. Tyler** felt the hardest part was that even if they felt they did everything suggested by the DRB, there was still no guarantee that they would be approved at the end of the process, and it could be quite expensive.

H. Cism said a campground with more than four or more sites needed conditional use by the DRB. It was confusing for the DRB because it was the first time approving a campground and some of the regulations were hard to decipher. There was a lot of

discussion with the Town Attorney and the Fire Chief about road/driveway standards and e911 access. There was not a lot in the regulations about campgrounds, so it was difficult to figure out what applied and what did not. It would be easier going forward to have something in the regulations about the DRB being able to waive certain aspects regarding campgrounds.

The Planning Commission discussed the State definitions of campgrounds being restrictive. With four sites, a wastewater permit would kick in as well as the need to hire an engineer and get a permit from the State. There was discussion about what the State meant regarding “twelve nights a year,”. The Planning Commission believed it meant that if you had less than four campsites you might still need a wastewater permit to rent out campsites for more than twelve nights in the year.

H. Cism clarified that needing a wastewater permit did not necessarily mean you would need a septic or mound system; the permit could state that you need portable toilets or something else.

The Planning Commission would like to be clearer on what the twelve nights a year means before they move forward and adopt anything. There was discussion on what it meant to have a camp vehicle.

M. Tyler felt item four of the regulations regarding roads was the real issue they needed to look at regarding campsites. **G. Lamphere** asked what the downside of removing four would be. **H. Cism** said that ideally emergency vehicles should be able to get to campsites, some weren’t perfect but felt most would be all right. **M. Tyler** felt it was good to have access to the campground but maybe not each site. Maybe they should take out the word primitive in 308C.

H. Cism would talk with Allison at the State for clarification on regulations for campgrounds and wastewater.

Public Outreach

M. Tyler said public outreach came up in ACT 181 and 1705. He wanted to separate 1705 entirely until they heard more from the Selectboard. **I. Gehlbach** felt they should do one at a time to avoid confusion.

The ACT 181 meeting and sentiments expressed by multiple people on the committee brought this up. They felt it needed to be a wider discussion with the community instead of just the few people on the committee.

M. Reilly volunteered to be a Planning Commission representative about 1705 and attend meetings and get more in-depth information from the Selectboard. **M. Tyler** says he reached out to Pat Haller about the historical preservation. He told Pat he would like to be involved, and he would like to have **M. Reilly** involved as well. He will let Pat know.

Some members of the public commented that they felt there were some flaws with the outreach process that occurred previously. Some would like the Planning Commission to be careful about hiring consultants and conduct surveys of the community. Some residents may show up to meetings and some may not; there should be a variety of means

to solicit the community. The Planning Commission discussed how the outreach process should unfold.

M. Tyler was sent an extensive document regarding the process of public outreach from the Vermont Council on Rural Development. He set up time with Darren Schibler and Kate McCarthy at CCRPC for July 8th to see what resources they suggest. What were the Town's goals for this outreach process? ACT 181 implications, zoning updates, Tier Three Rule Making for ACT 250, etc.? **M. Tyler** reviewed the Westford's Future document to see what has changed since it was created in 2019. The Planning Commission was provided the survey from 2019 in their packets.

Some members of the public felt that the Planning Commission had the hard job of accommodating what the State wanted and what the residents wanted. When they are not on the same page that should be communicated to both entities. These members of the public felt this was lost with Maple Shade.

Further public comment suggested that the Planning Commission be careful when looking at the conclusions from the previous future plan work. They felt it was a small group of people who were involved in that.

M. Reilly felt that communicating with the town what opportunities each decision would come with was important when interpreting legislation and guidance from different planning groups, state, etc. She felt the town might have some considerations that the planning commission was not aware of.

G. Lamphere said that the public had brought up some good points, he thought that from his personal experience the last outreach was very extensive. They put out postcards, the Selectboard was involved and came to the meetings, they had multiple meetings at the school, they took the information and came back after several months and had follow up meetings with the community, there were requests by VT Rural Development to go to the other committees in Town (common, rec, conservation), go to business owners, etc. He thought it was good to have these conversations because they want to get even more people involved and find out how to do that.

Public Comment: None.

Correspondence

- Correspondence about minutes was discussed in the minute section.
- They received a letter from Colchester about updates they're making, no action required but useful to look at in terms of the process they went through.
- Tier three rulemaking ACT 250 discussion.
- CHIPS ACT was passed by the state legislature.

Work Plan

- A, B, C, TBD list - H. Cism and M. Tyler will look over these to see where they stand before the next meeting.
- H. Cism will follow up with Allison
- Meeting with CCRPC

- Letting the SB know that Mo is interested in being involved and staying informed regarding 1705.
- Find a direction for our goals for outreach and start a plan for how to get there.
- DRB suggested list to review - 1, 3 & 4 to address for next meeting. (accessory structure size, wetland buffers, agricultural soils)
- M. Tyler and H. Cism will work on the agenda for the next meeting.

M. Tyler made a motion to enter an executive session to discuss personnel at 8:08pm, W. Dunkley seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

G. Lamphere motioned to exit executive session at 8:24pm,

M. Tyler seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

No decisions were made during the executive session.

M. Tyler motioned to adjourn, M. Reilly seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.