

Tommy O'Connor

From: Callie Hamdy
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 10:57 AM
To: selectboard
Subject: Encouragement to Appoint Kirsten Tyler to Planning Commission

Selectboard,

After reading through the public packet for Thursday's meeting I wanted to provide my encouragement for the board to appoint Kirsten Tyler to the Planning Commission. Kirsten is an individual I feel has shown time and time again to have not only strong moral character, but the ability to remain calm and collected when situations around her are chaotic or tense, such as the Selectboard meeting regarding the potential for donated land off Beaver Pond Road where the neighboring landowners were very belligerent and angry. You may also recall that during that meeting a Selectboard member (who has also applied for a Planning Commission seat...) incorrectly recused themselves to cross the room and yell at Kirsten, a moment that was very embarrassing and uncomfortable to witness. Despite this, Kirsten remained calm.

Given the history of the Planning Commission and the town's upcoming projects I think it is important that members appointed to the commission be able to come at conversation with an educated, calm, and collaborative mindset. In my opinion, Kirsten upholds all of these in her current positions in town and would be an excellent addition to the Planning Commission because of these characteristics. Additionally, Kirsten's background and education will be helpful when it comes time to work on 1705, something she has already assisted with by bringing in the UVM students and professor through her connections there.

The other applicants recommended by the Planning Commission are also good choices, but I feel the need to write to the board in my capacity as a resident and not as a town clerk to encourage Kirsten's appointment because I feel the accusations of nepotism and unethicity are extremely unfounded. We are a small town and a majority of people have connections in some form or manner (Maria, my assistant, is my husband's best friend's sister and we attended high school together for example). If Kisten's connection to the current PC chair does not meet the personnel policy's standards for nepotism it should not be an aspect to consider when it comes to Kirsten's potential appointment.

Thank you,
Callie Hamdy

Tommy O'Connor

From: Town Planner
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 1:24 PM
To: pbirnholz@comcast.net; selectboard
Cc: PlanningCommission
Subject: RE: Planning Commission Appointments

Hello all,

Respectfully, I would like to take a moment to clarify several points raised in Mr. Birnholz's recent email to ensure that the Selectboard and Planning Commission are working from a clear and consistent set of facts.

While the interview and appointment process may have varied in the past, The Selectboard formally adopted the Westford [Volunteer Appointment Policy](#) in May 2025 to establish a standardized and transparent appointment process across multiple boards and committees, including the Planning Commission. In this case, the Planning Commission followed that policy: interviews were conducted, deliberations occurred (during a robust and lengthy discussion) in executive session as required, and recommendations were forwarded based on qualifications and discussion, as reflected in Max Tyler's email.

As I understand it, the intent of this policy was, in part, to avoid duplicative effort by enabling boards and commissions to take the lead on the initial review of candidates. While the Selectboard retains full authority over final appointments, disregarding or undermining that process without clear justification risks eroding the purpose of the policy, the credibility of the Town's volunteer appointment system, and overall faith in Town boards and staff.

I would also encourage consideration of staff working conditions (in this particular case, specifically morale and safety), when making final appointments. While I will not share my opinions on specific candidates in this email, I am available to provide input as relevant Town staff, consistent with Section VI.b.iv. of the Volunteer Appointment Policy, should the Selectboard find that helpful.

Finally, with respect to community surveys conducted for prior Town Plan updates, both the 2010 and 2021 plans were informed by surveys developed by the Town Planner at the time. The 2009 survey was compiled by Planning Commission members, and the 2019 survey results were compiled using SurveyMonkey and the Town Planner's analysis. Available records do not indicate direct involvement from CCRPC in drafting those surveys. The results from both the [2009 survey](#) and the [2019 survey](#) remain publicly accessible on the Town's website.

As both boards are aware, future community outreach will be an important component of the 2029 Town Plan update. I would, however, argue that there are not "many more Town employees than in the past." At present, planning and zoning functions are carried out by a single staff member. I truly hope that the Selectboard will begin the search for a part-time Town Planner in the near future. If/when a Town Planner is hired, resources will be consistent with those available during prior planning cycles.

It is critical that discussions of Town processes remain grounded in fact and conducted in a manner that supports, rather than undermines, the work of Town boards, commissions, and staff.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please feel free to reach out if any additional clarification is needed.

Sincerely,

Harmony Cism

Administrative Officer & Planning Coordinator

Town of Westford

(802) 878-4587

This email message, along with any response or reply, is considered a public record, and thus, subject to disclosure under the Vermont Public Records Law (1 V.S.A. §§ 315-320).

From: pbirnholz@comcast.net <pbirnholz@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 8:51 AM
To: selectboard <selectboard@westfordvt.us>
Cc: PlanningCommission <planningcommission@westfordvt.us>
Subject: Planning Commission Appointments

Selectboard, Westford VT

RE: Planning Commission appointments

Dear Selectboard,

I am writing regarding the upcoming appointments for new members of the Planning Commission (PC). While it is the Selectboards's responsibility to appoint new members the process has changed since the time I was chairman of the PC. At that time the PC had no role in selecting members. I have stood for appointment more recently to the PC on two occasions. The first time I was 'interviewed' by the PC and found 'unworthy' (despite my past experience and connections in this area) because I was not in full agreement with some of what the PC was doing. I expressed my frustrations/concerns with the process to the Selectboard at that time and the second time I applied I was not subjected to such an 'interview' but was given the opportunity to ask the PC questions regarding the direction and projects which I thought important for the PC to address. Listening to parts of the recent PC meeting the process seems to have reverted back to the PC doing 'interviews' and then making their recommendation to the Selectboard. This is inappropriate as previously noted and is akin to members of the Supreme court informing the Senate as to whom they should confirm as new members of the court. Following this process reduces outside opinions and ideas and serves to simply continue the status quo. It is obvious from observing the activities of the PC over the past months (or longer) that the PC is in need of 'fresh blood' with new ideas, opinions and direction for the PC. I strongly urge the Selectboard (SB) to ignore any recommendations from the PC as well as correcting the process to correct the PC's involvement. I find this particularly important in the current instance as the PC has, on numerous times, demonstrated its antagonism and bias's against certain community members who have not supported them on some issues in the past.

I am also concerned over the recent trend for prospectrs with connections to some of the Regional Planning Commissions (RPC) being appointed to our own PC. While this might seem like a good idea due to their knowledge and

connections it has a number of flaws. While the RPC's have been helpful and necessary to our own PC in providing administrative, legal and other services, I am sorry to say that the RPC and the Westford PC have not always been in agreement and there were multiple times when I was chair of the PC that we found the RPC changing what we had proposed for what they were pushing. There is frequently a conflict of interest between what the State and the RPC's are proposing and the interests of the individual towns. Any PC member with affiliations to a RPC has an apparent 'conflict of interest and should not be a member of the PC. This is also a problem because due to the member with RPC affiliations other members tend to 'defer' to their 'expertise' and such member is thus able to exert undue influence on PC decisions. This problem became quite apparent during the 'wastewater' issues which the town recently contended with as the State's plan being pushed by RPC's was for development in towns to take place from the town 'center' outward but was quickly stymied in many towns due to constraints on wastewater, etc. in those areas. Our PC 'jumped' on this process (as being extensively pushed by one member with connections to the RPC's) by proposing substantial development around the town common (including turning a good portion into a parking area), giving property that was part of the 'common' to adjoining property owners (thus allowing/giving them more property which could be developed) and bring 'wastewater' to the area. This was followed by the recent Act 181 (?) REQUIRING towns to develop the town center. This was a long process initiated by the State and RPC's as their vision of what Westford should be. Had the Selectboard been more diligent in selecting and appointing members to the PC we might not have had a single member on the PC for 20+ years in which to push his (and RPC's) project.

The third item I would like to address is the 'Town Plan'. While plans were at one time revised every 5 years the current town plan (TP) has had minor revisions over the years but is based on a survey conducted over 20 years ago. When I last 'stood' for appointment to the PC I was told that the PC had no interest in revisiting the TP. The survey which was conducted and which eventually led to our current TP was prepared with the 'assistance' of the RPC and at the time both I, and other community members I have spoken with, refused to complete it and returned it to the town office with complaints pointing out that numerous questions were misleading and 'called for' an obvious desired response (eg: would you like to see development controlled in a specific area, such as the town center, or take place wherever someone wanted to build ?? – there were many other similar type 'questions). RPC also assisted in compiling and 'interpreting' the results and presented drafts of 'their' results as 'our' TP. It is obvious from the recent 'debacle' over 'wastewater' that this is not what the town wanted even though, as Mark Letorney repeatedly pointed out – it was what the TP" called for. It is time after approximately a quarter of a century for the town to conduct a new/proper survey and I strongly urge the SB to direct the PC to do so with substantial review and assistance from the public rather than their continued heavy reliance on the RPC, particularly since there are now many more town employees than in the past who can perform some of these functions.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.

Sincerely

Paul Birnholz

Tommy O'Connor

From: Harmony Cism
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 3:37 PM
To: selectboard
Subject: FW: DRB candidate

Hello (again) Selectboard!

Here is the DRB's recommendation for appointment, per the Volunteer Appointment Policy:

Greg Baker is a new candidate seeking appointment for a 3-year term.
Bill Cleary and **Jesse Lebreque** are seeking reappointment for another 3-year term.
Dennis Angiono is seeking reappointment to the 1-year Alternate term.

Sincerely,
Harmony Cism
Administrative Officer & Planning Coordinator
Town of Westford
(802) 878-4587

This email message, along with any response or reply, is considered a public record, and thus, subject to disclosure under the Vermont Public Records Law (1 V.S.A. §§ 315-320).

From: Matt Wamsganz <Matthew.Wamsganz@globalp.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 3:23 PM
To: Harmony Cism <zoning_admin@westfordvt.us>
Subject: RE: DRB candidate

Dear Selectboard,

The DRB interviewed Greg Baker last night. He would like to be appointed to the seat being vacated by Max Tyler at the end of his term. Greg is a good candidate for the seat and the DRB recommends you appoint him. The DRB also recommends the reappointment of Bill Cleary, Jesse Labrecque, and Dennis Angiono to their respective seats. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Matt Wamsganz
DRB Chair

From: Harmony Cism <zoning_admin@westfordvt.us>
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 1:57 PM
To: Matt Wamsganz <Matthew.Wamsganz@globalp.com>
Subject: DRB candidate

This message originated from outside of Global Partners - Please use caution before opening attachments or clicking on links.

Hi Matt,

This is just your friendly reminder to draft a short statement to the Selectboard reflecting the DRB's recommendation for appointment. As a reminder:

Bill Cleary and Jesse Lebrecque have applied for reappointment for another term and Dennis Angiono is applying for reappointment to the Alternate seat. Greg Baker interviewed to be newly appointed.

If you could send something to the Selectboard (or to me, and I'll forward it along) by Thursday, that would be great! Thank you!

Sincerely,

Harmony Cism

Administrative Officer & Planning Coordinator

Town of Westford

(802) 878-4587

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Tommy O'Connor

From: pbirnholz@comcast.net
Sent: Wednesday, March 25, 2026 6:20 PM
To: selectboard
Subject: FW: Planning Commission Appointments

Dear Selectboard,

I received this response regarding my recent correspondence to the SB. I find it disturbing that one member of the board has decided to respond on behalf of the SB. (as you can see it comes via the SB email site) Mr. Haller apparently believes that he speaks for the entire SB (since he is using the SB email) and I find it incomprehensible that the SB members would consider the importance and longstanding effects members of the PC can have on the town as equivalent to that of members of the town road crew, cemetery commission, etc..

Mr Haller has indicated that these are his personal views which he is entitled to but when serving as a member of any town commission/board/etc any such members first commitment should be to what is best for the town and not their personal feelings If someone feels differently than they do not belong in their position.

From: Pat Haller <Pat.Haller@westfordvt.us>
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 10:56 AM
To: pbirnholz@comcast.net
Subject: RE: Planning Commission Appointments

Paul,

Thank you for your email. I wish to respond with my opinion.

I disagree that the SB must interview candidates and ignore the recommendations of the PC. I believe we should ask the PC and other bodies to interview candidates and make recommendations and the SB reserve the opportunity if they choose to also interview. The SB agreed to this process last year. I would not want a potential road crew member to not be interviewed first by the Road Foreman and Town Administrator and for the SB to not ask them to make a recommendation. Same with Cemetery Commission, Development Review Board, Common Committee, Conservation Commission, and Recreation Committee.

I do understand why members of the community and the previous SB shifted to the model you suggested but in my opinion it did more harm than good. When the Board had this discussion Nick did ask if in future at we could reconsider in the future and if my fellow members wish to propose a change, then it'd be discussed.

Regarding RPC relationship. I see what you mean. You may guess that I hold a different view and you'd be right.

On Town Plan, agreed that a survey will be needed and if we get a new Town Planner as intendend in July, that person can start working on it. You will likely not like that we hope to be using RPC staff to help us in the planning stages if we don't hire a Town Planner, and if we are successful in the UPW planning grant we applied for and will learn about in May.

Sincerely, Pat Haller

From: pbirnholz@comcast.net <pbirnholz@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 8:51 AM
To: selectboard <selectboard@westfordvt.us>
Cc: PlanningCommission <planningcommission@westfordvt.us>
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Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.

Sincerely

Paul Birnholz

Tommy O'Connor

From: Thomas Lane <tom.lanetw@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 25, 2026 7:26 PM
To: selectboard
Subject: Recommendation for Planning Commission

Dear Selectboard Members,

I would like to recommend Kirsten Tyler for the Westford Planning Commission. Kirsten has demonstrated her ability to coordinate, organize and be objective in her role as Conservation Commission Chair. In addition, she has been instrumental in supporting the Westford School. Kirsten also is the reason the Westford Farmers Market returned to the Westford Common. Since coming to Westford she has been a tireless, positive member of the community. Also, her academic background would contribute to her ability to see the whole picture and plan for the future.

Thank you for your time and effort as members of the Westford Selectboard.

Sincerely,
Thomas W. Lane