

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES FOR MAY 18TH, 2026
APPROVED ON JUNE 1, 2026**

Commissioners Present: Max Tyler, Ben Bornstein, Art Woolf, Kirsten Tyler, Will Dunkley

Commissioners Absent: None.

Also Present: Harmony Cism (Planning Coordinator & Zoning Administrator), Maria Barden (Minute Clerk), G. Lamphere, B. Peck, L. Johnson, Maureen Wilcox

The meeting began at 6:30pm.

Amendments to the Agenda

B. Bornstein brought up an email from Kickback Brewery that was sent. This would normally be discussed under correspondence, and it was responded to by **H. Cism. M. Tyler** thinks this is out of the Planning Commission's hands.

Planning Commission Membership Updates

a. The Planning Commission thanked George Lamphere for his time on the board:

“On behalf of myself and other commissioners who have served with you, I would like to thank you and recognize your many years of service to the commission and to the Town of Westford. Your service spanned periods of energetic development of the town plan and zoning regulations, complex development of community wastewater funding mechanisms, and vigorous, sometimes discordant, public debate. In addition, you assumed the leadership of the Commission through difficult periods of membership transition. Throughout these challenges, your fellow commissioners have recognized your openness, fairness and professionalism. Your tenure is marked by dedication to the Town, transparency, and efforts to seek compromise and build consensus. I, for one, will miss your thoughtful deliberations and guidance and thank you for your service to the Town and the Commission.”

Max Tyler

Westford Planning Commission, Chair

G. Lamphere has enjoyed working for the Planning Commission and the Town. His parting knowledge for the board was to try and prioritize outreach within the community and serve all the community.

b. The Planning Commission welcomed the new commissioners to the board.

M. Tyler thanked them all for joining the board.

Reorganization

a. Election of chair, vice chair & clerk:

B. Bornstein motioned that **M. Tyler** continues to serve as chair the Planning Commission, **A. Woolf** seconded; Motion carried 5-0.

M. Tyler motioned to nominate **W. Dunkley** to continue to be vice chair of the Planning Commission, **B. Bornstein** seconded; Motion carried 5-0.

W. Dunkley motioned to nominate **B. Bornstein** to be Clerk of the Planning Commission, **A. Woolf** seconded; Motion carried 5-0.

b. Review and approve the 2026 rules of procedure:

There was one small change to the rules of procedure regarding it being adopted prior to May 1st, since newly appointed terms don't begin until May 1st, this language was slightly changed.

M. Tyler motioned to approve the rules of procedure as written, **W. Dunkley** seconded; Motion carried 5-0.

c. Discussion of Planning Commission meeting packets & information sharing:

H. Cism asked if the Planning Commission wants DRB info added to each packet for Planning Commission meetings. The Planning Commission discussed how they'd like to go about this, **H. Cism** will send them DRB plans and decisions as they happen, so they have more time to look it over in real time. **B. Bornstein** wanted to put his phone number out to the public for anyone who would like to reach out to him - 240-506-5286.

L. Johnson recommends the Planning Commission includes the packet online so that members of the public can be informed as well.

This is something that **H. Cism** can do.

B. Peck agrees with **L. Johnson**.

Citizens to be Heard - Items not on agenda.

None.

Approval of Minutes – March 16th, 2026

M. Tyler motioned to approve of the March 16th, 2026 minutes as amended.

W. Dunkley seconded; Motion passed 4-0.

Continued Discussion – Updates to Land Use & Development Regulations

a. *Overview of land use regulation adoption process:*

M. Tyler gave a brief overview on the process of how the Planning Commission would amend the Land Use & Development Regulations and discussed what the Planning Commission's responsibilities are when it comes to the adoption process of Land Use & Development Regulations.

A. Woolf asks why this is something they're currently doing.

M. Tyler says because of issues that have come up and because they haven't been looked at for a while. **M. Tyler** mentions that they have a long list of items in their packets that were brought to them by multiple sources such as CCRPC to comply with the HOME ACT, some issues were brought from the DRB to the Planning Commission, and other questions came to **M. Tyler** from other sources. These items have all been discussed by the Planning Commission and they've made a list of which ones they should look at and work on currently.

M. Tyler says his starting position is that these rules were written the way they were for a reason, there was outreach at the time they were made.

K. Tyler asks if smaller towns tend to have simpler regulations over bigger towns in VT?

M. Tyler says it really varies; some towns have no regulations whatsoever; this would have to be researched a little bit more. These regulations have been in place for five years out of an eight-year plan and **M. Tyler** doesn't feel it's unreasonable to start looking at them.

W. Dunkley is excited to dive in and look at the regulations.

B. Peck wants the Planning Commission to keep in mind that zoning and planning should be fair and felt it was unfair that points were reduced for a developer who got approval from the DRB and reminds them others were only able to get the reduced points because she pointed it out at a DRB meeting.

H. Cism and **M. Tyler** clarified that this had happened when they thought major updates would have been made to the regulations prior to that decision, they ended up meeting the twenty-seven points, and anyone in that zone was welcome to use the reduced points for the time frame that they were reduced.

B. Bornstein says from a CCRPC perspective that whatever changes will be made does have to be reviewed by CCRPC, and in April, CCRPC included updated plans of Underhill, Jericho and Colchester. He thinks it would be beneficial for the Planning Commission to look at those to see the processes, potential issues that CCRPC had, and see what neighboring towns are doing.

b. *Review of prior draft revisions:*

M. Tyler goes over and gives a brief overview of each item on the list of draft revisions.

Public Comment

L. Johnson asked if they had decided to work on any Land Use & Development Regulations.

No, they had not, that would be a further agenda item.

Correspondence

- DRB Waiver approval of an accessory structure on Old Stage Rd.
- DRB Conditional Use approval for a driveway on Cambridge Rd.
- ACT 181 Correspondence
- CCRPC will be giving an educational session on planning on the 15th of June
- CCRPC newsletter was sent
- M. Tyler sent an email to Taylor Newton regarding logistical planning

B. Peck says maple shade was a no vote and if the Planning Commission is interested in resurrecting it, they need to have proper outreach.

- **M. Tyler** asked the SB to give a report on what is happening with the EWSD.
- Draft plans from the capstone project with the SB
- **L. Johnson** correspondence about being careful with river access.
- Ex-Parte communication emails - SB's jurisdiction
- Spring planning and zoning forum
- *H. Cism will send a recording to those who can't make it if a recording is available.*
- Ethics training email from **M. Barden**

W. Dunkley plans to post a short update to FPF after each Planning Commission meeting to keep people in town updated on their discussions.

Work Plan Review

- Land Use Regulations - **H. Cism** asked how they'd like to share the document, Google Docs doesn't do great with track changes. They will table this for now and bring it back up when they get a little closer to making those changes. **M. Tyler** says they're taking the land use regulations and discussing changes in relation to the current Town Plan. **B. Bornstein** asks if they want to divvy up the list.
***B. Bornstein** will share his list for the next meeting, and it will be added to the packet. They will split up items at the next meeting.*
- **W. Dunkley** would like to discuss the WRO with other commissioners to see what they have to say about it; he'd like to make it smaller and more aligned with what other Towns are doing.
***M. Tyler** asks that **W. Dunkley** bring specific language to the next meeting on what he'd like to change.*
- **W. Dunkley** sees that Westford is a hard place to move to based on zoning/lack of rentals and would like to see Westford become more accessible to a wider array of people. He would be interested in looking at the R10 and R5 zoning districts to see if there was a way someone could subdivide and build easier.
- **K. Tyler** wants to explore how the Planning Commission can help and become more involved with 1705; she doesn't want the house to just sit there. She would like to do a deep dive into creative ways to reach the public that aren't just surveys. She feels if we want to look at the Town Plan and the Zoning Regulations there should be serious discussions with many people in Town. They should try and reach everyone in town, including the people who can't always show up. **K. Tyler** would like to see all the committees/boards in town be more connected so they can all help each other and be more cohesive as a town in general.
- **A. Woolf** wants to help make it easier for people to build housing. We might need more flexibility and creativity to find some ways to promote these builds. Are there some sort of bonuses they can give to developers/builders to promote those buildings? **H. Cism** says we do give density bonuses. **A. Woolf** asks what the Planning Commission can do to attract more people to Westford; perhaps some of the open land doesn't have to just be about agriculture but could be open land to attract more people to Westford and continue to keep the rural feel to draw people to the town.
- **M. Tyler** thinks most DRB members feel our regulations require landowners to go through an expensive process to build a home.
- **B. Bornstein** discusses CCRPC and its response to the LURB comments and he believes we want to identify other areas that could have the potential and be approved as developed areas or town centers.
B. Bornstein also feels we should encourage implementation and mounting of solar energy, he thinks we should be concerned about climate change and impact.

- **M. Tyler** says he thinks there are two big underlying efforts that they should be engaged in. One is 1705 and the other is the work on the new town plan adoption process. He feels there are things that are independent to the town plan, including 1705, UPWP for assistance - transportation related, updating the feasibility study from ten years ago, and stormwater grant money. He feels these are some smaller projects that aren't necessarily related to the Town plan update.
M. Tyler believes the SB will be requesting a joint Planning Commission and SB meeting to discuss how to coordinate the beginning of the 1705 project. Right now, the SB oversees 1705 and the Planning Commission has nothing to do with it until they are engaged by the SB.
M. Tyler would also like to have regular information and education going out to the town, such as what **W. Dunkley** mentioned with FPF.
M. Tyler would love to work on the Municipal Planning Grant and kickoff of a town plan update process; and help facilitate bringing more activities to Westford, collaborate with other commissions/boards to put things on for the town to bring more engagement and interest to Westford.
- Next meeting is June 1st followed by June 15th
- Proposed project charter that M. Tyler brought for review, which will be added to the June 1st meeting.
K. Tyler wonders if **M. Tyler** can share responses from the public regarding his FPF posts so they know how people are feeling.

M. Tyler moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:58pm, B. Bornstein seconded; Motion passed 5-0.
Meeting Adjourned at 8:59pm