



**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
WESTFORD TOWN OFFICE & ZOOM
MONDAY, JULY 20, 2026**

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/94052797756?pwd=Xjs1YgcF7hToKD4BFvS69JBUcW51yH.1>

Meeting ID: 940 5279 7756 | Passcode: 5B6PMY

Please note that agenda times are approximate and subject to change.

1. **(6:30) – Call to Order**
 - a. Roll Call
 - b. Amendments to the Agenda
2. **(6:33) – Citizens to be Heard - *Items not on agenda***
3. **(6:35) – Approval of Minutes**
 - a. June 15, 2026
4. **(6:40) – Continued Discussion: Updates to Land Use & Development Regulations**
 - a. Campgrounds
 - b. WRO Buffers
 - c. Diagram Formatting
 - d. Interim Bylaw: R5 Scoring System
 - e. Regulation Update Timeline
5. **(7:25) – Discussion: Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**
 - a. Recap of 7/16 meeting
 - b. Project Teams Identification
6. **(7:40) – Correspondence**
7. **(7:50) – Work Plan Review**
8. **(8:00) – Anticipated Executive Session (Personnel)**
9. **Adjournment**

Next Regular Meeting: Monday, August 17th at 6:30pm

Disclaimer:

If a quorum of the board is present in person, the meeting will continue even if electronic participation is disrupted or disconnected.

The Vermont Department of Health advises individuals to assess their own risk and decide whether to take precautions, such as wearing a mask. Please stay home if you are feeling unwell.

Individuals requiring reasonable accommodation may request assistance from the Planning & Zoning Department. The Town will evaluate each request to determine if the accommodation is necessary for access to a Town service, program, or activity; if an alternative accommodation could provide equivalent access; if the requested accommodation would cause an undue financial or administrative burden; or if the accommodation would fundamentally alter the nature of the Town's service, program, or activity.

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES FOR JUNE 15TH, 2026
APPROVED ON ****, 2026**

Commissioners Present: Max Tyler, Kirstin Tyler, Will Dunkley, Ben Bornstein

Commissioners Absent: Art Woolf

Also Present: Harmony Cism (Planning Coordinator & Zoning Administrator), Maria Barden (Minute Clerk), Lori Johnson, Barb Peck, Francois Ross (DRB), Pat Haller (Selectboard), Bill Cleary (DRB), Greg Baker (DRB), Darren Schibler (CCRPC), Maya Balassa (CCRPC), Nick Nichols (Selectboard)

The meeting began at 6:30pm, the meeting was held in person and via zoom.

Amendments to the Agenda

None.

Citizens to be Heard - Items not on agenda

None.

Approval of Minutes - June 1, 2026

B. Bornstein moved to approve the June 1st, 2026 minutes as amended. **K. Tyler** seconded, motion passed 4-0.

Essentials of Land Use Planning Training - CCRPC

CCRPC gave a training/presentation to the Planning Commission about what they do at CCRPC and Municipal Planning.

Main points that were discussed:

- Planning for a vibrant, sustainable community,
- Implementing the plan,
- Meetings, hearings, due process,
- Seed bank/bike rack.

Some of the discussion points touched on the planning process steps, what a Municipal Plan is and why it is important to have one, and some benefits of having a regionally approved and confirmed plan. They also discussed Vermont Planning Process Goals and the importance of public participation at all levels. (IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is a great tool for public engagement). For more help with community engagement CCRPC is a useful resource, you can also look to professional facilitators.

The Planning Commission and members of the public had a chance during the presentation to ask questions and make comments.

Work Plan Review

Next meeting: July 20th, 2026

Possible joint meeting with the Selectboard coming up - no set date yet.

M. Tyler moved to adjourn, **K. Tyler** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46pm

Draft Campground Standards:

Section 308. Campgrounds

308.A Campground Standards

Any parcel of land occupied by transients using single-axle towed campers, travel trailers, cabins, yurts, lean-tos, or tent sites for seasonal occupancy, vacation, or recreational use is considered a campground.

A new or expanded campground with 4 or more campsites may be allowed in designated zoning districts subject to site plan and conditional use review under Sections 421 and 422, applicable state agency referral requirements, and the following provisions:

1. A campground shall meet minimum setback requirements for the district in which it is located. No building, campsite, parking, or service area shall be located within required setback areas.
2. Landscaping and/or fencing shall be required along property boundaries or within designated areas of the campground as necessary to provide security, privacy, and screening from adjoining properties.
3. Campground density shall not exceed 18 campsites per acre.
4. Adequate access and parking shall be provided. Campground roads shall be designed in accordance with minimum standards set forth in Figure 3-6.
5. Campgrounds shall provide lavatory facilities sufficient to serve all campsites. Water and wastewater disposal systems shall be designed and installed in accordance with applicable state regulations. An enclosed area for the collection, storage, and disposal of trash and recyclables shall be provided.
6. The campground may include as accessory to the campground, subject to conditional use review, an office, communal dining, laundry, indoor recreation, and/or camp store facility, and outdoor recreation facilities for the use of campers.
7. Outdoor lighting shall comply with Section 324. Lighting for roads, pathways, campsites, parking areas, and security shall be considered Class 2 lighting. Lighting for pavilions, recreation facilities, gathering spaces, and similar common areas shall be considered Class 1 lighting.
8. All campground signage shall comply with Section 326. Internal way finding, site identification, and directional signage within a campground shall be considered accessory to the principal use and subject to the same standards.

308.B Undeveloped Campgrounds

For substantially undeveloped camping areas consisting only of designated tenting areas, tent and yurt platforms, or lean-tos, the Development Review Board may waive or modify

any or all of the requirements of Section 308.A(4) above if it is demonstrated to the Board's satisfaction that access, total lot area, campsite area, setback distances, and buffers are adequate to:

1. Support the intended level of use; and
2. Avoid any undue adverse impacts to water quality, critical wildlife habitat areas, or adjoining properties and uses.

Undeveloped, primitive camping areas may only consist of structures that are:

1. A single floor,
2. Less than 500 square feet in total area, and
3. Without interior plumbing or wastewater facilities.

Notes for the PC:

Minimum lot size has been discussed. The DRB Chair suggested a minimum lot size of 5 acres to support a campground. However, the Regulations already specify that non-residential lots shall have a minimum size of 5 acres in the R5 District, and 10 acres in the R10 District.

Kirsten had suggested adding the following sentence to 308.A(7): *“Temporary and seasonal campground signage shall be permitted in accordance with section 326.D, and shall be removed or covered when not in use.”* However, this seems redundant after the first sentence of that section. If this sentence is kept, the word *permitted* should be changed to *allowed*.

Campground standard comments

The first sentence of our latest draft says “Any parcel of land occupied by transients using single-axle towed campers, travel trailers, cabins, yurts, lean-tos, or tent sites for seasonal occupancy, vacation, or recreational use is considered a campground.” Recreational Vehicles (RVs) aren’t mentioned. Is there a reason for this? Does this mean to exclude them or am I misreading this?

- Section 323 comments

Though 323 is detailed and somewhat demanding of a potential campground developer, the regulations make sense to me and I expect are something that a potential developer would expect to have to follow. The modification I would propose is as follows under Section 323 J

323. J Landscape Plan Requirements. The Development Review Board may require an applicant to submit a landscape plan prepared by a qualified professional as deemed necessary to assure conformance with these regulations. A landscape plan prepared by a licensed landscape architect or certified horticulturalist will be required for all major subdivisions, PUDs, or land development that will require more than 8 parking spaces, ~~except for campgrounds.~~

I propose these changes to prevent a potential developer from being required to submit a landscape plan. The DRB could still require one.

- Section 327 comments

- Regulations make sense to me. Campgrounds would create a lot of disturbance and this disturbance should be done so as to prevent erosion. Our regulations achieve that without being too onerous for a campground developer, IMO.

Harmony Cism

From: Harmony Cism
Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2026 2:29 PM
To: PlanningCommission
Subject: WRO DRB applications

Categories: Planning Commission

Hello Planning Commission,

I've spent some time researching the Conditional Use (CU) applications that the DRB has reviewed involving the Water Resource Overlay (WRO). This information may be useful as you consider potential updates to the regulations.

Since the adoption of zoning in Westford (approximately 1971), the DRB has reviewed 14 applications requiring Conditional Use approval for impacts within the WRO.

Of those 14 applications:

- 11 involved wetland buffers, while 3 involved streams and/or river corridors.
- 3 involved impacts only within the Town's 100-foot wetland buffer, while 8 involved impacts to Class II wetlands and the State's 50-foot wetland buffer.
- 8 were standalone Conditional Use applications, while 6 were reviewed in conjunction with other applications such as subdivisions or site plan review.
- Only 1 application involved impacts within the Town's 50-foot wetland buffer but outside the State's 50-foot buffer, AND was reviewed solely as a Conditional Use application rather than in combination with another review.

Overall, the data seems to show that applications involving only the Town's additional wetland buffer protections have been relatively uncommon, while most WRO-related Conditional Use reviews have involved areas already regulated under State wetland protections.

YEAR	APPLICANT	wetland?	Town Buffer ONLY?	CU review ONLY?
2008	Bergman	Y	N	Y
2011	Westford Fire Dept.	N	*	Y
2013	Messier	Y	N	Y
2013	Richter/Camisa	Y	N	Y
2015	Dragon/Greci	Y	N	Y
2016	Campbell	Y	N	Y
2018	Blackrock Const.	Y	N	N
2021	Czapski	Y	N	N
2024	Swansong Take Two	N	*	N
2024	White	Y	Y	N
2025	Girr	Y	N	N
2025	WCC	N	*	Y
2026	King	Y	Y	N

2026 Sepic/Grinstead Y Y Y

Please note that this information was compiled from Planning Commission and Development Review Board files. Prior to 2008, certain Conditional Use applications were reviewed by the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA), and I have not yet completed a catalogue of those records. While there may be additional WRO-related Conditional Use applications prior to 2008 that are not reflected in this summary, the data presented here represents all applications identified through the records reviewed to date.

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).

Harmony Cism

From: Kirsten Tyler <kirstenbeat@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 7, 2026 12:51 PM
To: PlanningCommission
Subject: Fwd: Wetland buffer question

PC members,

From Tina Heath regarding wetland buffers below.

RKT

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Heath, Tina" <Tina.Heath@vermont.gov>
Date: June 7, 2026 at 8:41:03 AM EDT
To: Kirsten Tyler <kirstenbeat@gmail.com>
Subject: RE: Wetland buffer question

Good morning, Kirsten.

Thanks for contacting me. I can't really weigh in on how a local municipality should regulate wetlands. However, the 50-foot buffer applied to Class II wetlands under the VWR is the minimum width that was determined to balance protection of wetland functions with development. Generally, the larger the buffer zone, the more protection these areas provide wetlands with significant functions, especially related to wildlife habitat and corridors, water quality protection, and flood storage (which provides additional space between flood-prone areas and infrastructure that could be at risk of flood damage).

Best,
Tina

Tina Heath

District Wetland Ecologist – Chittenden County
Wetland Bioassessment Coordinator
VT Department of Environmental Conservation
Watershed Management Division, Wetlands Program
111 West Street | Essex Junction, VT 05452
802-490-6202

<https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/wetlands>

Check out the [Wetland Rule Changes](#) Comments Due Jan. 14

From: Kirsten Tyler <kirstenbeat@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 1, 2026 9:51 PM
To: Heath, Tina <Tina.Heath@vermont.gov>
Subject: Wetland buffer question

You don't often get email from kirstenbeat@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

EXTERNAL SENDER: Do not open attachments or click on links unless you recognize and trust the sender.

Hi Tina,

I am on the Westford Planning Commission and we are looking over our land use regulations and perhaps changing some. Can you provide some feedback from a wetland ecologist perspective on our WRO, specifically for (4) WETLANDS. We have a 100' buffer from our class 2 wetlands. Would you make a case for keeping the 100' buffer? Or do you think we should change it to 50'? We would be curious as we deliberate to get an opinion from an expert.

Chapter 200 here: https://westfordvt.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-Westford-Land-Use-Development-Regulations_Amended-1.pdf

Language from our land use regulations doc here:

Water Resources Overlay. The Water Resources Overlay District includes the land specified below as generally shown on Map 5 of the Town Plan. As Map 5 may not be inclusive of all water resources intended to be in the WRO, the Administrative Officer may determine that a stream, pond or wetland exists on a property and apply the provisions of the WRO to said property and adjacent property as specified below regardless of whether the feature appears on the map. The Administrative Officer may determine that a ditch for the purpose of drainage is or is not within the WRO.

- (1) BROWNS RIVER. Land within 100 feet from the top-of-bank of the Browns River as shown on Map 5 of the Town Plan.
- (2) STREAMS. Land within 50 or 100 feet from the centerline of all named and unnamed streams shown on Map 5 of the Town Plan.
- (3) PONDS AND LAKES. Land within 50 or 100 feet the water's edge of all named and unnamed ponds and lakes shown on Map 5 of the Town Plan. The Administrative Officer shall determine that land is not included within this overlay if it is associated with manmade ponds that are located independent of any streams or waterways and that the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has not classified as a Class 1 or 2 wetland.
- (4) WETLANDS. Land within 50 or 100 feet, as established below, from a delineated Class 1 and/or 2 wetland boundary as identified under the most recent edition Vermont Wetlands Rules. The landowner may provide, or the Administrative Officer or Development Review Board may require, a field delineation of a wetland boundary by a qualified professional based on the criteria established in the most recent edition of the Vermont Wetlands Rules.
 - (a) All Zoning Districts - Land within 100 feet from a delineated Class 1 wetland boundary.
 - (b) Common & Village Zoning Districts – Land within 50 feet from a delineated Class 2 wetland boundary.
 - (c) R3, R5 & R10 Zoning Districts – Land within 100 feet from a Class 2 wetland boundary.

Thanks for your feedback,
Kirsten

Section 202. b

(1) BROWNS RIVER. Land within 100 feet from the top-of-bank of the Browns River as shown on map 5 of the town plan

2) STREAMS. Land within 50 ~~or 100 feet~~ from the centerline of all named and unnamed streams shown on Map 5 of the Town Plan.

(3) PONDS AND LAKES. Land within 50 ~~or 100~~ feet the water's edge of all named and unnamed ponds and lakes shown on Map 5 of the Town Plan. The Administrative Officer shall determine that land is not included within this overlay if it is associated with manmade ponds that are located independent of any streams or waterways and that the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has not classified as a Class 1 or 2 wetland.

(4) WETLANDS. Land within 50 or 100 feet, as established below, from a delineated Class 1 and/or 2 wetland boundary as identified under the most recent edition Vermont Wetlands Rules. The landowner may provide, or the Administrative Officer or Development Review Board may require, a field delineation of a wetland boundary by a qualified professional based on the criteria established in the most recent edition of the Vermont Wetlands Rules.

(a) All Zoning Districts - Land within 100 feet from a delineated Class 1 wetland Boundary ~~and land within 50 feet from a delineated Class 2 wetland~~

~~(b) Common & Village Zoning Districts — Land within 50 feet from a delineated Class 2 wetland boundary.~~

~~(c) R3, R5 & R10 Zoning Districts — Land within 100 feet from a Class 2 wetland boundary.~~

List of Figures:

Figure	Title	Page #
Figure 2-1	Density and Lot Size	2-8
Figure 2-2	Rural Strip Development	2-9
Figure 2-3	R5 Planning and Design Standards	2-13
Figure 2-4	Transect Zone Map	2-23
Figure 2-5	Transect Zone Descriptions	2-31
Figure 2-6	Frontage Type Descriptions	2-32
Figure 2-7	Transect Zone Summary Table	2-33
Figure 2-8	T5 Standards	2-34
Figure 2-9	T4 Standards	2-35
Figure 2-10	T3 Standards	2-36
Figure 2-11	T2 Standards	2-37
Figure 3-1	Subdivision Review Criteria	3-14
Figure 3-2	Example Density Bonus Calculation	3-21
Figure 3-3	Transfer of Development Rights Between Zoning Districts	3-21
Figure 3-4	Transfer of Development Rights Between Parcels	3-22
Figure 3-5	Spacing Standards	3-28
Figure 3-6	Dimensional Standards Table for Roads & Driveways	3-33
Figure 3-7	Required Amount of Off-Street Parking	3-34
Figure 3-8	Light Fixture Shielding, Lamp Type, and Time Limits	3-41
Figure 3-9	Total Outdoor Light Outputs	3-41
Figure 3-10	Examples of Acceptable/Unacceptable Lighting Fixtures	3-42
Figure 3-11	Maximum Sign Area and Height	3-46
Figure 3-11-A	Sign Area Calculation	3-46
Figure 3-12	LID Standards	3-53
Figure 3-13	Guidance on Selecting Appropriate LID Practices	3-54
Figure 4-1	Development Review Criteria	4-11
Figure 4-2	Waiver and Variance Review Criteria	4-14
Figure 5-1	Lot Lines and Measurements	5-10

244.C **Planning & Design Standards.** Figure 2-3 sets forth a series of planning and design standards that will be used to determine whether proposed development is achieving the objectives listed above in accordance with the following:

- (1) **Intent.** The intent of this scoring system is to provide greater flexibility for applicants to determine how best to meet the objectives given the characteristics of the proposed site and use.
- (2) **Procedures.** The Development Review Board will score development applications based on the planning and design standards. While the Board may discuss strengths and deficiencies of an application at meetings/hearings, the final score shall be determined in deliberative session. Further:
 - (a) Except where specifically indicated, points will not be awarded cumulatively for meeting multiple performance measures within a given category.
 - (b) Where Figure 2-3 states “professional design required,” the applicant must submit a landscape plan prepared by a licensed landscape architect, ~~or~~ certified horticulturalist, or licensed civil engineer.
 - (c) When applying the planning and design standards, areas of mowed lawn will not be considered landscaping, but planting areas and materials used as a low-impact development (LID) technique for stormwater management may be considered landscaping.
- (3) **Minimum Score.** In addition to conforming to the other applicable provisions of these regulations, applications must attain a final score of ~~27-25~~ or more points (out of a possible 40) to be approved by the Development Review Board.
- (4) **Effect of Score.** The Development Review Board will consider applications that earn ~~257~~ or more points to have met Criteria 1, 2 and 3 in Figure 4-1 (Development Review Criteria), as applicable.

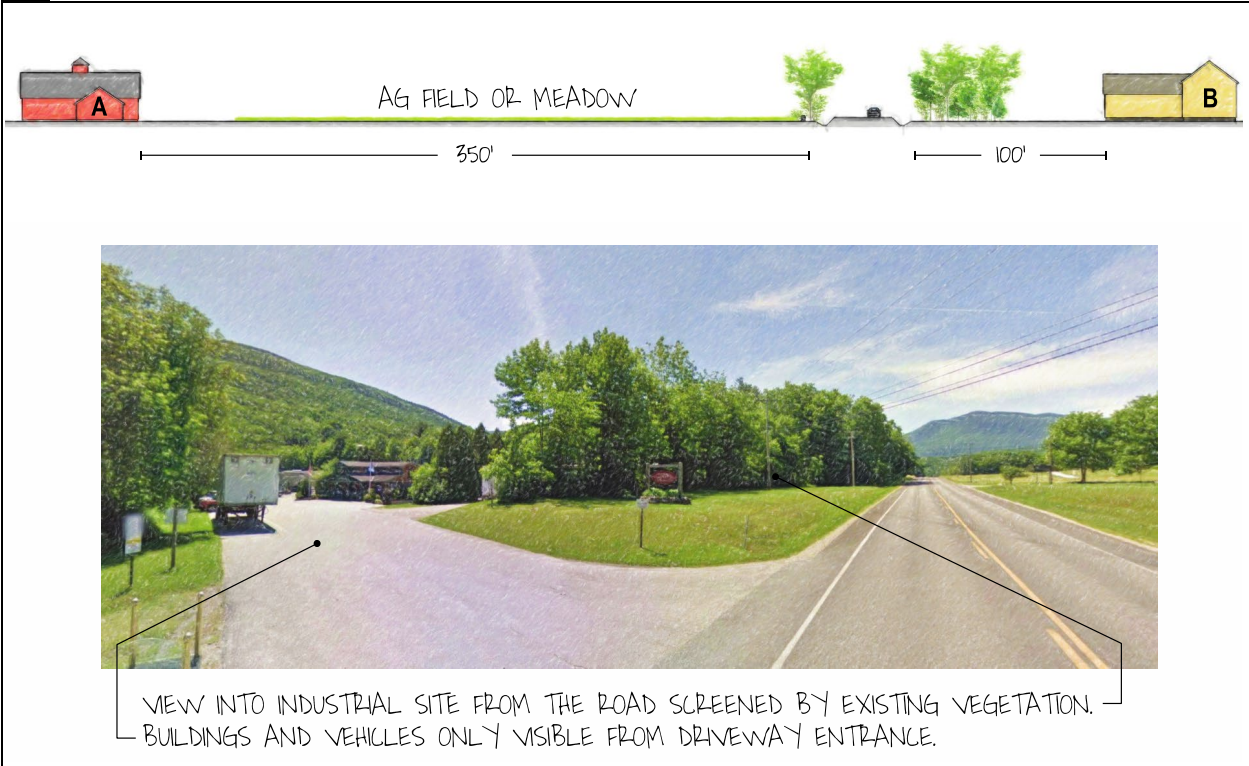
Figure 2-3. Planning & Design Standards

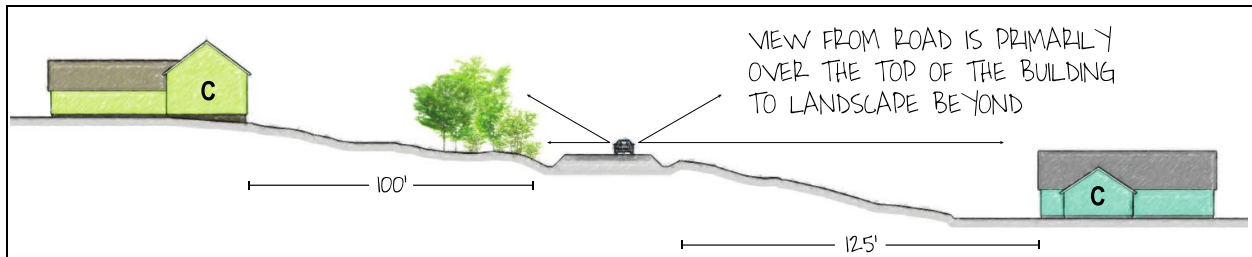
1	Location. Infill development and development within proximity to the Common and Village Zoning Districts is encouraged. 2 PTS MAX (Points are cumulative.)
A	The subject property is already developed. 1 point
B	The proposed development will be located within 1 mile of the Town Common. 1 point
2	Farmland. Development should be located to minimize fragmentation of productive ag land, including primary ag soils. 5 PTS MAX (Points are NOT cumulative.)
A	The proposed development will not be located on productive agricultural land or primary agricultural soils and will maintain viable access to said lands/soils. 5 points
B	At least 60% of the parcel's productive agricultural land or primary agricultural soils will remain undeveloped and suitably configured to be farmed and will maintain viable access to said lands/soils. 2 points
C	At least 25 acres of the parcel is enrolled in the State of Vermont Use Value Appraisal Program (Current Use) and will remain enrolled in Current Use after development. 1 point
D	At least 30% of the parcel is currently used for crop production and will remain in crop production after development and will be placed into an agricultural easement. 1 point
3	Access. The number of new access points on rural highways should be minimized to limit opportunities for increased traffic congestion and accidents by designing development so that adjacent properties will be connected through a cross access and/or driveways will be shared or aligned. (Points for B & C will be awarded cumulatively.) 5 PTS MAX

A	The proposed development will be served by an existing <u>or relocated</u> curb cut that serves existing residential or non-residential development.	5 points
B	The proposed development will provide access to multiple lots or sites from a cross access, shared drive or private road.	3 points
C	The proposed development will align its new access with an existing curb cut on the opposite side of the road that serves existing residential or non-residential development.	1 point

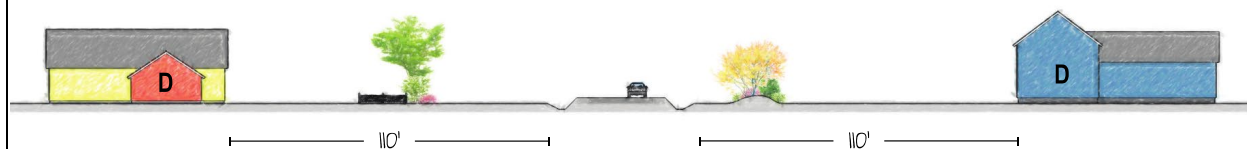
4 Frontage. Development should not dominate the view from the road. Compliance must be proven from at least six vantage points at representative locations. Vantage points should be at regular intervals. The DRB may require additional vantage points if needed based on terrain, vegetation, or other site specific circumstances. The area between the road and building should primarily be agricultural, wooded or naturalistically landscaped. **3 PTS MAX**

A	Lot frontage will be an agricultural field or meadow at least 300 ft deep or a naturally wooded buffer at least 50 ft deep.	3 points
B	Lot frontage will have a natural elevation change substantial enough to screen development.	2 points
C	Lot frontage will include berms, fencing and/or landscaping to screen development (professional design required).	2 point





BUILDINGS LOCATED BELOW THE ROAD WITH TREES ALONG FRONTAGE. VIEW FROM ROAD REMAINS PRIMARILY OF THE MOUNTAINS IN THE BACKGROUND.



FENCING AND LANDSCAPING CAN SOFTEN AND BREAK UP VIEWS OF PARKING OR STORAGE AREAS. LANDSCAPED BERMS ARE MORE EFFECTIVE WHEN HEAVIER OR MORE SOLID SCREENING IS NEEDED. LONG STRETCHES OF STOCKADE-TYPE FENCING OR HEDGE-LIKE PLANTINGS SHOULD BE AVOIDED.



FENCE AND LANDSCAPING SOFTENS VIEW OF FRONT PARKING AREA. IT IS STILL VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD, BUT IS LESS OBTRUSIVE AND VISUALLY DOMINANT.

5	Buildings. Buildings fit into the rural landscape and are compatible with their surroundings. Franchise or corporate architecture and standardized "box" designs are strongly discouraged.	3 PTS MAX
A	No new building will be built or the new building will not be visible from the road.	3 points
B	The new building will be similar in scale, form and materials to traditional Vermont building types as defined in Chapter 5.	3 points
C	The new building may vary in scale, form and materials from traditional Vermont building types as defined in Chapter 5, but it will feature a context-sensitive design that references Vermont vernacular architectural forms and materials and protects Westford's rural character.	2 points

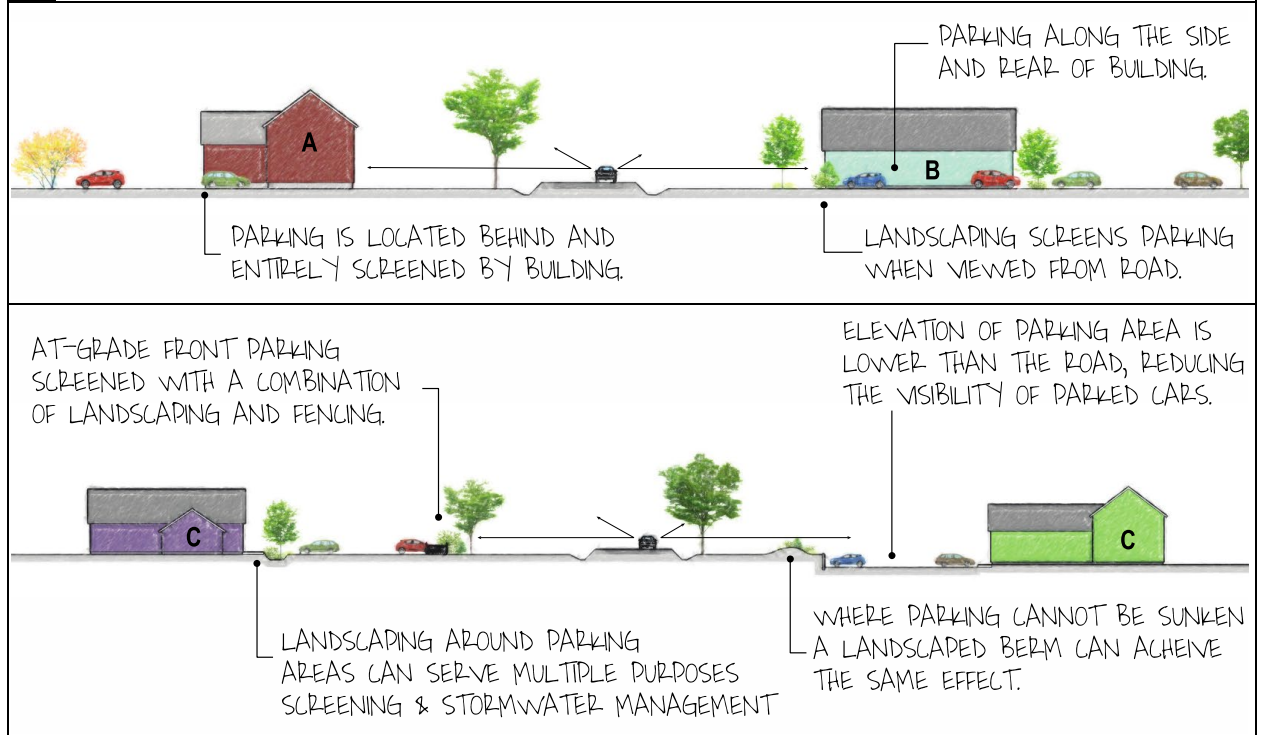


THE CONTEMPORARY, METAL INDUSTRIAL BUILDING (RIGHT) HAS THE FORM OF A TRADITIONAL MONITOR BARN. THE REHABILITATED HISTORIC BARN (LEFT) HAS A NEW LIFE AS AN OFFICE BUILDING.



THE NEW HOUSE (LEFT) CLOSELY REPLICATES THE DESIGN OF A HISTORIC VERMONT FARMHOUSE. THE NEW HOUSE (RIGHT) IS A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF THE VERMONT VERNACULAR. THE BUILDINGS ARE SIMILAR IN SCALE. THEY SHARE FEATURES LIKE ROOF FORM, CROSS-GABLES AND THE PORCH.

6	Parking. Parking should be designed and located to minimize its visibility from the road. Compliance must be proven from at least six vantage points at representative locations. Vantage points should be at regular intervals. The DRB may require additional vantage points if need based on terrain, vegetation, or other site specific circumstances.	4 PTS MAX
A	No parking will be visible from the road.	4 points
B	Parking will be located to the side or rear of the building and will be screened with landscaping (professional design required).	3 points
C	Parking will be located in front of the building and will be screened with landscaping (professional design required).	2 points



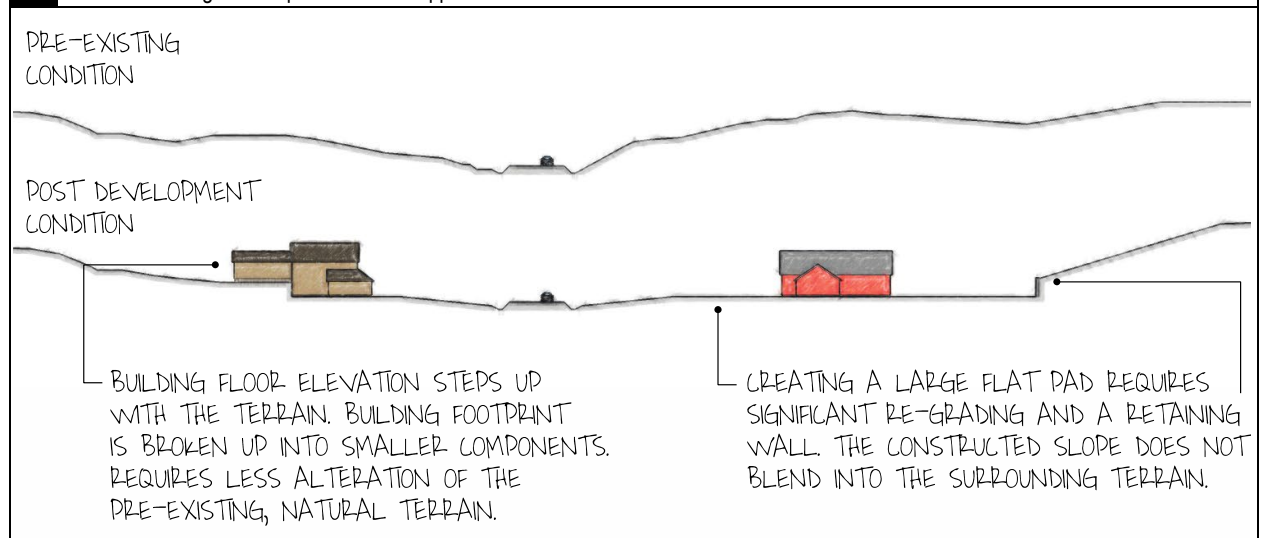
7	Service Areas. Loading, trash, equipment, utilities and other service areas and vehicle bay doors should be designed and located to minimize their visibility from the road.	3 PTS MAX
A	No service areas or vehicle bay doors will be visible from the road.	3 points
B	Any vehicle bay doors will face away from the road and any service areas will be located to the side or rear of buildings and screened (professional design required).	2 points
C	Vehicle bay doors will face the road and/or service areas will be located in front of the building and screened (professional design required).	1 point

8	Outdoor Storage or Sales. Outdoor storage for commercial or industrial uses should be designed and located to minimize its visibility from the road. Display areas for retail businesses should be designed and located to avoid visual clutter and maintain an attractive roadscape.	5 PTS MAX
A	There will be no outdoor storage or sales associated with the use.	5 points
B	There will be outdoor storage or sales, but it will not be visible from the road.	4 points
C	There may be incidental outdoor storage located to the rear of the building, or a limited amount of merchandise displayed in a location visible from the road.	2 points
D	Outdoor storage will be a principal component of the use, but it will be screened (professional design required)	1 point

9	Use. Working farm and forest lands are the foundation of Westford's rural character. Land uses and new enterprises that support agriculture, silviculture and maintenance of open land are encouraged in rural areas.	3 PTS MAX
A	The use will be an agricultural enterprise, including the sale or processing of locally-produced farm or forest products or agri-tourism, or will be an agricultural or silvicultural support business.	3 points
B	The use will involve the production or sale of live plants, farm or garden products, art, or hand-crafted items.	2 points
C	The use will involve outdoor recreation, lodging, dining, or event hosting.	1 point

10	Off-Site Impacts. Commercial or industrial uses should not operate at a scale or intensity that will result in adverse off-site impacts or degrade the rural character of the area. <i>(Commercial or industrial points are cumulative)</i>	4 PTS MAX
A	The use will not generate regular employee, customer, and shipping traffic in excess of 20 trips per day.	1 point
B	The use will not operate between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.	1 point
C	The use will occur entirely within an enclosed building.	1 point
D	The use will not require more than 10 parking spaces.	1 point
E	Residential use excluding home occupations	4 points

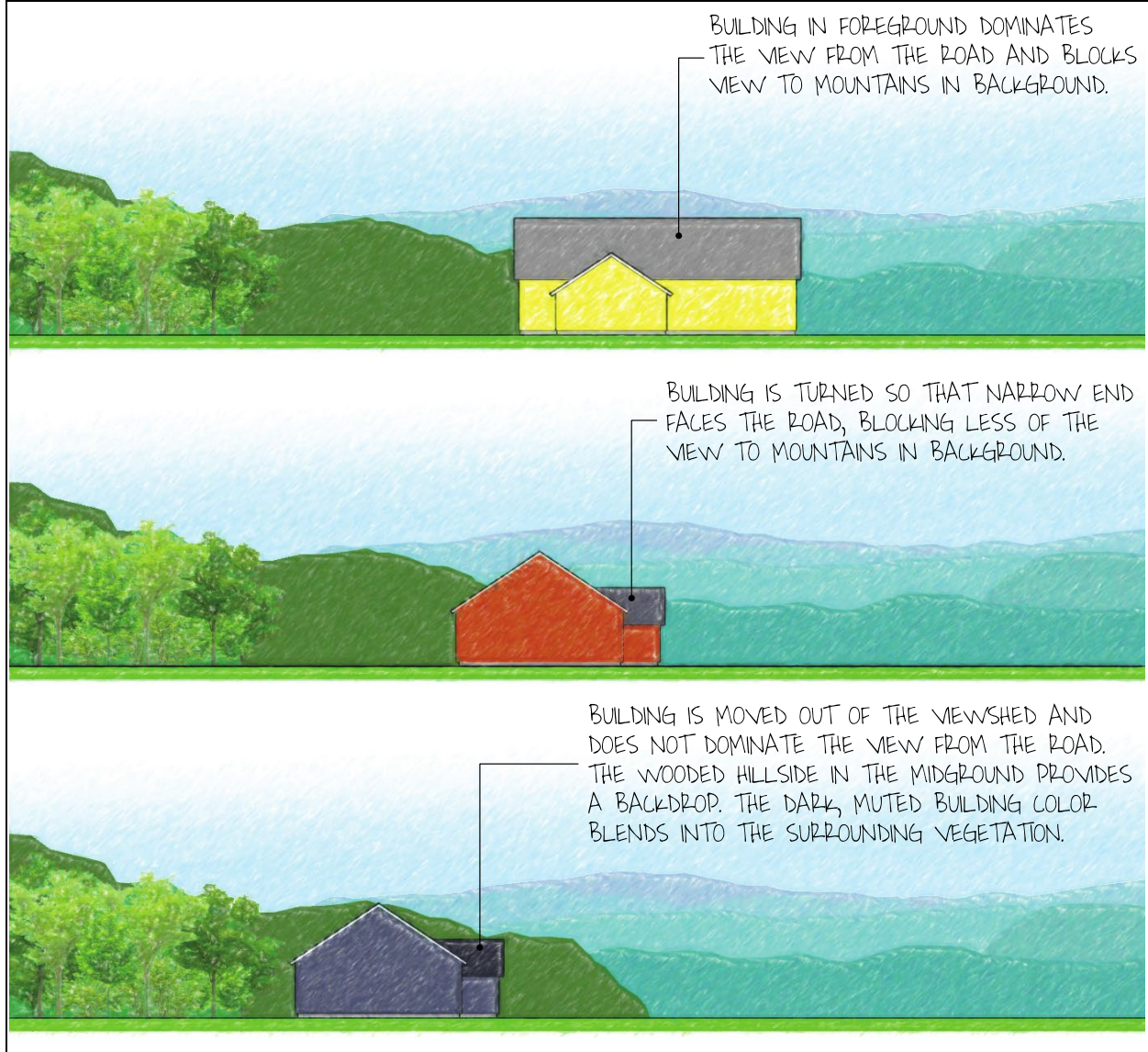
11	Terrain. Development must be designed and located to fit into the natural terrain to the maximum extent feasible.	2 PTS MAX
A	The development will result in no to minimal change in the site's natural grade.	2 points
B	The development will significantly alter the site's natural grade but will result in a landform that is compatible with the surrounding landscape and will not appear unnatural or constructed.	1 point



12 **Views.** Development should be designed and located to maintain views (from the road) of Mount Mansfield or any other important views identified in the *Westford Town Plan*. Compliance must be proven from at least six vantage points at representative locations. Vantage points should be at regular intervals. The DRB may require additional vantage points if needed based on terrain, vegetation, or other site specific circumstances. See illustrations below. **2 PTS MAX**

A The proposed development will not be located within a Mount Mansfield or other important viewshed. 2 points

B The proposed development will be located within a Mount Mansfield or other important viewshed, but it will be designed so that it does not substantially block the view from the road. 1 point





1713 Vermont Route 128 • Westford, Vermont 05494
Town Office: (802)878-4587 • Fax: (802)879-6503
www.westfordvt.us

Memorandum

To: Westford Planning Commission

From: Harmony Cism, Administrative Officer & Planning Coordinator

Date: July 10, 2026

Re: Timeline for Adoption of Permanent Zoning Regulation Amendments

The current interim zoning bylaw regarding Figure 2-3: Planning & Design Standards for development requiring approval by the DRB in the R5 Zoning District expires on **October 10, 2026**. In order for permanent amendments to become effective before the interim bylaw expires, the Town would need to follow an extremely compressed schedule. This schedule represents the earliest practical timeline and leaves virtually no flexibility for additional revisions, continuances, or scheduling conflicts.

The timeline would be as follows:

Date	Action
9/4/26	PC warns public hearing on the proposed amendments
9/21/26	PC holds public hearing and votes to forward the proposed amendments to the Selectboard
9/23/26	SB warns its public hearing on the proposed amendments
10/8/26	SB holds public hearing and adopts the amendments
10/10/26	Interim bylaw expires. Permanent amendments would need to become effective by this date.

This schedule assumes that:

- The PC completes its review and is prepared to hold its public hearing on September 21.
- No substantive changes are made during either public hearing that would require additional hearings or revisions.
- The Selectboard is able to place the hearing on its October 8 agenda and take final action that evening.
- All statutory noticing and procedural requirements are satisfied.

Because there is effectively no contingency built into this schedule, any delay (including the need for additional revisions, continuation of a hearing, or missed publication deadlines) would likely prevent the permanent amendments from taking effect before the interim bylaw expires.

For these reasons, if the Commission wishes to meet the October 10 deadline, it will be important to finalize the proposed amendments well in advance of the September hearing and minimize the likelihood of substantive changes following public review.

May 18, - June 10, 2026

Town of Westford, Vermont

Review of Westford Land Use Regulations

B. Bornstein, Member Town of Westford Planning Commission

RE: Review of Current Town of Westford Land Use Regulations and Identification of Potential Edits, Amendments, and/or Corrections.

TO: Members of the Town of Westford Planning Commission

From: B. Bornstein, Member Town of Westford Planning Commission

DATE: June 9, 2026

Comments by Harmony Cism, Administrative Officer/Planning Coordinator in RED

Summary: In follow-up to the Town of Westford's (W) Planning Commission's (WPC) meeting on May 18, 2026, I am forwarding a list of items and issues regarding the current Westford Land Use Regulations for potential edit, amendment, and/or removal.

I. General:

- a. There are multiple sections/paragraphs that contain a notice that there is an "Error! Reference source not found." Accordingly, the underlying source reference needs to be identified, updated and or corrected. What is the basis for this notation? (*See inter alia*, Section 244.B, and section 254.A(1);
***This is a known formatting issue that appears to have occurred when the document was converted to pdf format during the 2021 updates. The former Town Planner and I had marked this for correction during this next update cycle. The reference in 244.B should say "(as defined in Paragraph 511.S(17))" and 254.A(1) should say "defined in Paragraph 511.S(17)." These corrections have been made in my running "track changes" version of the regs.**
- b. In the original document, there do not appear to be page numbers. In the .pdf (AdobeAcrobat) format, there is a page number tracking, however, the page number is not embedded in the document itself;
This appears to only be an issue for Section 2 – page numbers are visible on all other sections. I can work on addressing this in my track changes document.
- c. Some of the "Figures" or design pictures/drawings do not necessarily appear immediately in the same section where they are relevant or referenced (e.g.,

Figure 2-1, is a schematic that is relevant to Rural 3 District AND Rural 10 District. It would help to ensure a clear reference to all sections for which the schematic is relevant – including a page number for ready and easier access)(certainly having a closer correspondence of diagram/figure to relevant text would be more user friendly);

Agreed. Figure 2-1 is relevant to ALL zoning districts, and perhaps this can be addressed by adding a reference to this figure and page number under “Density” in Sections 242.A, 252.A, and 263.C(3). Alternatively, the density definition and diagram could be moved under Chapter 200 “General Provisions.”

- d. A detailed listing and explanation of schematics in consecutive order, should appear in either a designated appendix, and/or with the Table of Contents (e.g., perhaps it could list the sections (and page numbers) for which sections/pages the schematic is relevant on the figure - especially where this is more than one section that relies upon the schematic for elucidation).

Agreed.

II. Broader Issues:

Review the language regarding permissible and conditional uses under each zoning district:

See e.g., “Section 243.B: Conditional Uses Within this district the Administrative Officer **may issue a zoning permit for the following uses** after conditional and site plan approval by the Development Review Board [DRB] and if the requirements of Chapters 300, 320, 330 and 420 are met:”

1. The use of the word “may” suggests that the Administrative Officer (Zoning Administrator (ZA)) has discretion to do something other than issue a zoning permit after the DRB has reached its decision. On what basis would/should the ZA have the authority to decline or choose to not follow through on a decision issued by the DRB?

The word "may" reflects that issuance of the zoning permit remains contingent upon submission of a complete zoning permit application and compliance with the DRB's approval and any conditions imposed. The Administrative Officer does not have discretion to disregard a valid DRB decision, but does retain responsibility for determining whether the permit application conforms to that decision before issuing the permit.

2. In the section referenced above and each of the sections for the other districts, there is an accompanying list of permitted uses and conditional uses. Permitted uses are generally within the immediate purview of the ZA, and the conditional uses within

the direct purview (and appeal of ZA's handling of permitted uses) of the DRB. However, what happens when there are uses that are (or for which a use is claimed to be neither a permissible use, nor a conditional use? Does this mean that the DRB has no authority to review and/or make a final determination regarding authorization for such a use?

Uses that are neither listed as permitted nor conditional uses are generally prohibited unless they reasonably fall within an existing defined use category. That being said, several small-scale, undefined uses are often permitted as Home Occupation, or fit closely enough into another category to be reviewed by the DRB as that type of use.

An example might be under the R10 District permitted and conditional use lists; there doesn't appear to be a listing that would cover an application for building a religious house of worship. Would such a use come under section 253.B(5) providing for a "Community facility[,] or in this case would it come under section 253.B. (4) Club, private[?]" It isn't clear. Elsewhere, a religious house of worship is considered a "community facility" and is subject to the same standards/requirements that any commercial development would be. These references should be linked and more direct access to the requirements identified.

Places of worship and other religious facilities are listed under "Public Facilities," (Section 114), and are a permitted use in all zoning districts.

- III. Section 111.A. and other sections that reference restrictions regarding development of areas with ledges and outcroppings. These should be removed as fundamentally the improvements and advancements in construction engineering and planning have made many of the safety and aesthetic concerns of construction near or even on ledge or outcropping areas de minimis. Regardless, the Administrative Officer and the DRB have ample opportunity to review and determine whether the applied for construction presents any real threat or danger.

Further, what is the basis and or the fact based data that supports these blanket restrictions on any development in areas with "steep slopes and/or ledge outcroppings, especially where: a) the formula for determining whether a ledge area might well support an applied for building is complex to the point of a failure of experts to understand it, must less apply it objectively; and b) given the complex topography of Westford, constitutes a sweeping restriction on an entire "class" of property owners. Accordingly, in this case and elsewhere, remove the phraseology, "and on steep slopes and ledge outcroppings."

The Planning Commission previously reviewed this issue on November 17, 2025 and elected not to recommend changes to these standards. Furthermore, steep slopes

and ledge outcropping restrictions are mentioned in the Town Plan (page 88), so the Town Plan would have to be changed before a major change to the regulations in this respect.

IV. Procedural Concern:

Section 412: specifically, section 412.G. Where the “Administrative Officer must determine” whether an application is complete. If incomplete the Administrative Officer “must inform the applicant of what additional information is required.” There is no clear instruction as to how long an applicant has to respond to the Administrative Officer’s letter. Accordingly, there is a need to set out a specific time line or deadlines for responses to an application to the Administrative Officer that is determined to be incomplete. The reference to section 423 isn’t actually applicable, because there is neither a denial, nor an approval, nor a referral to the DRB. There is an omission here where the applicant is not clearly informed that s/he has only some 15 days from the date of the decision – ostensibly the date on the letter requesting further information, AND that regardless as to when the applicant submits any documentation/information s/he hopes is responsive, the applicant must resubmit the entire original application package as well. Still further, it is unclear whether the 15 days applies or is counted by calendar days or business days, however, the clock is ticking from the date on the letter. Failure to respond within that unidentified time period further restricts the applicant’s right to appeal to the DRB – as by the time the applicant finds out that his/her submission of supplemental documentation is untimely (or further incomplete because of the unknown failure to also include the entire original package), the time to appeal to the DRB has run out. Equity and the requirements of procedural and substantive due process demand greater clarity and specificity.

There is no time limit on how long an applicant has to submit a complete application. When an application is submitted, the ZA reviews the application to ensure that all necessary information and attachments are included. If the application is determined to be “complete,” the ZA has 30 (calendar) days to approve or deny the application, or to refer it to the DRB. (24 VSA §448(d), 4449). If the applicant disagrees with the ZA’s written determination that the application is incomplete, that determination may be appealed within 15 days pursuant to Sections 412.H, 423, and 24 V.S.A. §4465.

Please note that while this may not have been an issue recently, there is past history where these omissions have added layers of delay and expense to the applicants.

I have researched the specific situation in question here. It appears that the ZA at the time informed the landowner that the application was incomplete, and then the landowner filed an appeal on that determination. The appeal application was the item that had the 15-day

deadline, not the zoning application. The appeal application process is clearly laid out in the regulations and in State Statute.

[Note that section 413.A. only deals with a situation where a determination has been made that the application is complete and is approved or denied, or referred to the DRB – it doesn't inform the applicant that beyond X number of days the applicant must refile all of the original application package. Moreover, what can an applicant do when in fact the information being identified by the Administrative Officer as being the basis of the application being incomplete, is in fact in the original application package?]

In this situation, the applicant could file an appeal of the ZA's written determination that the application is incomplete on the basis that they believe all of the information has been submitted. (WLUDR Section 423, 24 VSA §4465.)

[Further note: that section 423.B. refers to the need to respond within 15 days of "the date of the action or decision" not the date of mailing or receipt (so when it is mailed on a Friday afternoon right before a three day federal holiday...and the decision was reached a couple of days before...)].

I understand the concern; however, this language mirrors the appeal period established in 24 V.S.A. §4465 and therefore cannot simply be modified through local regulations.

V. Nature of the Town's "Existing Level of Services":

Section 251.A(3): requires that, under "Rural character..." there not be placed an "unreasonable burden on the Town's ability to provide and maintain existing level of services."

- a. What does the term "rural character" mean in this context?

While "rural character" is not specifically defined, it is discussed in a broad sense within the Town Plan.

- b. Does the reference to "existing level of services" mean access to an electrical connection/grid, broadband, roads, fire/rescue services?

Generally, "existing level of services" refers to municipal services such as roads, emergency services, and other public infrastructure. Ultimately, the DRB evaluates this standard on a case-by-case basis based on the evidence presented.

- c. Who and how are any of these determinations made?

By the DRB. The DRB will often request input from the Fire Department and/or Road Foreman if there is any question about this topic.

- d. Is there any remedy or recourse?

Any mitigation or conditions would depend on the specific application and would be determined through the DRB's review process, often with input from the Fire Department and/or Road Foreman.

- B. Can some conditional uses be transferred to permitted uses within the immediate or direct review authority of the ZA to facilitate or expedite the processing of applications that are within the demonstrated expertise of the ZA – where based upon the experience and knowledge of the ZA, processing time and expense could be reduced, along with the DRB’s workload. Indeed, it could provide for an “efficiency of scale of operations” (*i.e.*, the more similar cases, and those with which the ZA has experience processing, the faster they could be processed *inter alia*, because of the institutional knowledge garnered by the ZA);

Yes! Not Conditional Uses *per se*, but after discussions with the DRB, the PC has (informally) decided to allow the ZA to review/approve minor subdivisions and accessory structures with a footprint of up to 1500SF. (Updates to Chapter 430 and Section 421.A(1)). Most Conditional Uses require determinations regarding parking, landscaping, etc. on which this ZA would honestly not be comfortable making a determination without DRB and adjoining landowner input.

- C. Under building requirements: where there is no difference in the treatment of commercial and residential garages and vehicle storage structures. Why is there a requirement that the doors of such structures not face the street. Absent an explanation, having a blanket one size fits all doesn’t appear to make sense.

The requirement to have side- or rear-entry garage doors is only applicable in the second lot layer of the T5, T4, and T3 zones of the Village and Common Zoning Districts (Section 263.D(4)), and also in the R5 District for development requiring DRB review (Figure 2-3(7)). The apparent purpose of this standard is stated in the regulations themselves: to minimize the visibility of garage doors from the roadway.

As currently written this requirement would appear to require, or perhaps does in fact require that additional areas be paved in order to have doors located on the sides of such structures. On its face, doesn’t this create immediate and long-term inconveniences in loading and unloading vehicles, and/or imposing the condition that people can’t exit directly from a garage to the driveway and directly to the road. Why shouldn’t this be a personal preference?

There is no paving requirement.

- D. Section 252.B: This ½ acre requirement becomes problematic where a business acquiring part of a greater lot that was “maxed out” of ½ acre residential lots, would be encouraged to use all of their acreage – arguably they wouldn’t be able to further subdivide. This would appear to run counter to the professed desire to discourage the fragmentation of natural and forest areas (in R10 on a 100 acre lot: there could be 9 one half acre lots (4.5 acres), and the 10th lot of 95.5 acres, they wouldn’t be able to build

more than one residential structure, but multiple other structures (businesses)? Regardless, on its face this is confusing. Need to better explain that or how everything counts against the maximum lot density.

Agreed that density language is confusing. In this example, you are correct that no additional residential structures could be constructed. However, none of the lots in this example would be eligible for a commercial structure either because non-residential development must be located on lots of at least 10 acres in size, and the 95.5-acre lot would have been designated as “Open Space” under the PUD/open space subdivision design requirements and therefore not subject to development.

- E. Section 454.B.(1) propose changing the word “may” to “must”. “..the Administrative Officer must...” Inter alia, leaving in the discretionary word “may” obviates the substantive and procedural due process provided in section 454.C, that provides for an appeal of the Administrative Officer’s action and/or decision to the DRB (ostensibly also to the Selectboard), when the applicant or appellant wouldn’t know whether such an action or decision had ever taken place.

The “may” in this case is only for *informal* notification of a perceived violation. The ZA *may* contact them in writing. In practice, the ZA often resolves minor issues through a phone call before initiating formal enforcement. Alternatively, the ZA doesn’t *have to* provide informal notice, they can directly issue a Formal Notice of Violation (NOV). The action or decision lies in the Formal NOV, which **MUST** be in writing and sent via Certified Mail, and is an appealable decision. The landowner does not have to respond to an informal notification. If they don’t, that’s when the Formal NOV is issued.

- F. Filing checklist for applications. Need to streamline and better explain in more direct and succinct language.

I’m not sure which section this is in reference to? The only checklists I use are the DRB application checklists, which are just a list of items needed to form a complete application, and which the DRB reviews periodically.

VI. Out of Sequence: More Than One “Village/Town Center”: See Chapter 260

Where applicable, perhaps under Chapter 260, provision should be included to consider or allow for more than one “transition area” or “village center” for commercial development. [Commentary/Observation for discussion: Where there has been significant opposition and division regarding plans (inter alia for wastewater infrastructure) in the historic “town center,” perhaps focusing on another developing area of the town would provide an opportunity to implement

the necessary inclusive process and infrastructure – where unforeseen complications and/or fear of the consequences of any failure might not be so acute. This, where missteps in pursuing any project in the historic town center could be or are feared to be irrevocable, while implementing an alternative controlled development area could go a long way towards instilling public confidence in future plans for the historic town center].

Any such change would first require policy direction through an updated Town Plan before corresponding amendments to the Land Use Regulations could be considered.

Harmony Cism

From: Seth Jensen <seth.m.jensen@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, July 10, 2026 7:38 PM
To: PlanningCommission; Harmony Cism
Subject: Westford Water Resources Overlay District

Categories: Planning Commission

Members of the Westford Planning Commission,

Today is the three year anniversary of the devastating 2023 Flood — the second largest flood on record in our watershed, behind only the Great Flood of 1927.

I am taking this opportunity to express significant concern about the current proposal to weaken wetland protections in Westford's Water Resources Overlay District.

The current proposal before the Planning Commission is to reduce the wetland buffer by half. The argument for this proposal (which is incomplete and inaccurate in ways that I will address later) is that the reduced buffer is all that is required by state regulations.

Over the last several years, we have heard a common refrain that "one size does not fit all." This is doubly true as it relates to wetlands. State regulations must be written to function in all communities regardless of size.

The Lamoille watershed experienced three of the five largest floods on records in 2023 and 2024, followed by a summer long drought in 2025. Larger communities have complex infrastructure to manage stormwater and complicated systems to store and treat drinking water. Westford relies on the ecological functions of wetlands for these and other critical, human needs.

I understand that some members of the Planning Commission feel that the proposal will not exacerbate human risk because provisions related to FEMA floodplains will not be modified. This does not account for the important role wetlands play in attenuating water BEFORE it reaches the floodplain.

In June of 2024, the Town of Stowe experienced a highly localized microstorm that triggered more than \$1million in damages to public roads and significant damages to private property. Notably, much of the damage was outside of the floodplain, and many of the areas damaged would have been protected from development under Westford's WRO. Due to the localized nature of this storm, the costs were almost borne locally instead of as part of a Federal Disaster.

Even Stowe, with its massive grand list, would have struggled to make these repairs. Westford would be completely bankrupt.

The rollbacks in Federal support coupled with increasing risk of natural disasters make this an inopportune time to reduce wetland protections.

Further, the three primary arguments in favor of this reduction are fundamentally flawed.

1. It has been claimed that Westford's wetland buffer was developed as a condition of an unnamed and unidentified "grant." Town staff have thoroughly researched this claim, and found that the WRO has been in place for decades, and was developed by past generations of Westford residents to protect the community and its waterways. All state and Federal grants require signed contracts that spell out grant conditions. No such contract has been located.
2. It has become a common refrain that "the state only requires a 50 foot buffer." While this is true as it narrowly applies to the Vermont Wetland Rules, there are numerous conditions under which a larger buffer can be required for class 2 wetlands under other state regulations. For example, state fisheries has the authority to require a larger buffer for wetlands contiguous to streams in the Act250 process, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife can require a buffer larger than 50 feet in wetlands that provide bear feeding habitat.
3. The final argument is that the buffer should be reduced because a reduction is supported by the DRB. Respectfully, the DRB is a quasi-judicial board charged with interpreting and applying the current regulation as written. The Board as a whole can provide valuable insight on procedural issues such as if a standard is vague, unclear, or difficult to interpret. On policy matters, DRB members are entitled to their opinions as citizens, but have no greater standing than any other citizen. Amendments to the Town's bylaws must be based on the policies of the Town Pman, developed through an open, public process. This is not opinion — it is central to statute and constitutional order. The separate legislative and judicial functions of the two boards are important to maintaining the separations of powers and duties in a constitutional form of government. As these lines have been blurred at the Federal level, it is even more important that they be maintained.

I understand that some members of the PC feel that the Town must consider reducing regulatory barriers in order to address Vermont's accrue housing shortage. There are other options to do this without weakening protections of our water resources.

Notably, the Town could clarify and expand the "small lots by right" provisions to allow clustering of smaller lots in rural districts without the master planning expenses of a PUD. Westford could also enable administrative subdivision review of minor subdivisions so that landowners with non-controversial, non-impactful subdivisions are spared the time and expense of the current multi-step hearing process. This option was only recently enabled in state statute, and is used in towns as small as Vershire (population about half of Westford). Finally, Westford could examine other resources, such as slopes, outcroppings, and soils, that, while important, are not as fragile as wetlands. Since the genesis of Westford's regulations in the 1970s, it has become common for conservation centric bylaws to identify "primary" resources such as wetlands with greater protections than "secondary" resources with more flexible provisions.

I am happy to discuss these options in greater detail. In closing, when my daughter is the same age mother is today, the year will be 2105. It is the responsibility of all of us to consider how decisions made today will impact those who inherit the legacy we leave behind — not just the short term expediency of the present.

Thank you,

Seth Jensen

RKT Wetland Buffer Comments - Westford Planning Commission

I support retaining Westford's existing 100-foot wetland buffer.

My position is based on the Town's adopted goals, the purpose of the Water Resources Overlay District, and the actual development data compiled by Harmony.

1. The proposed change appears inconsistent with the Town Plan.

The Town Plan recognizes that wetlands provide significant public benefits.

Page 85 states:

"Wetlands provide fish and wildlife habitat, flood and erosion protection, nutrient and pollution filtration, groundwater recharge, aesthetic diversity, and sites for educational and recreational activities."

The Town Plan also notes that:

"It is estimated that less than 5% of Vermont is currently wetland and that nearly 50% of Vermont's historic wetland area has been lost or severely impaired..."

The Plan further recognizes that wetland-dependent wildlife are sensitive to nearby development and disturbance and concludes:

"The Town will continue to support preservation of wetlands and wetland functions by enforcing its Water Resource Overlay District." (Town Plan, p. 85)

The proposal to reduce wetland protections should therefore be evaluated against the Town's stated commitment to preserve wetlands and wetland functions.

2. The purpose of the Water Resources Overlay District supports maintaining strong buffers.

The Town Plan states:

"Wetlands, rivers, streams, ponds, and source water protection areas are susceptible to the effects of construction, development, and other incompatible uses." (Town Plan, p. 95)

The Plan further states:

"The public's health, safety, and welfare is served by the protection of these necessary resources. Therefore, degradation and contamination of Westford's water resources is to be avoided." (Town Plan, p. 95)

The Water Resources Overlay Area goals include:

- Protecting wetlands and adjacent lands from adverse impacts of development, pollution, and disturbance.
- Maintaining water quality.
- Ensuring riparian buffers provide habitat for aquatic, avian, and terrestrial species.
- Reducing erosion and sedimentation.
- Preserving natural system function.
- Ensuring buffers absorb and slow runoff, maximize floodwater attenuation, and reduce flood severity. (Town Plan, pp. 95–96)

These goals all support maintaining protective buffers around wetlands rather than reducing them.

In addition, according to the VT DEC, 39% of wetlands in VT may not be mapped at all¹, which could mean that Westford WRO buffers currently do not cover all wetlands in town. And finally, more than 35% of the original wetlands in VT have been lost already¹.

3. The available evidence does not suggest the 100-foot buffer is a significant barrier to development.

The Zoning Administrator reviewed Water Resources Overlay applications dating back to 2008 and found:

- Fourteen Conditional Use applications involving the WRO.
- Eleven involved wetlands.
- Eight involved impacts within areas already regulated by the State.
- Only three involved impacts within the Town’s additional wetland buffer.
- Only one application over approximately eighteen years required Conditional Use review solely because of the Town’s additional wetland buffer.

I think this raises a pretty important question: what problem are we solving with this amendment?

If only one project in approximately eighteen years was reviewed solely because of the Town’s additional wetland buffer, the available evidence suggests that the 100-foot buffer has not been a significant obstacle to development or housing production in Westford.

4. Existing regulations already provide flexibility.

The current regulations are not an absolute prohibition on development.

The Water Resources Overlay District allows Conditional Use review for driveways, roads, bridges, culverts, trails, and stormwater infrastructure. The regulations also require applicants to demonstrate that there is no reasonable alternative and that impacts are minimized, which isn’t a bad thing, in my opinion.

This means Westford already has a mechanism to address site-specific constraints and difficult parcels without reducing protections across the entire town.

5. Looking forward.

A potential argument for removing the additional 50 feet is that it is rarely used. My answer: then why remove it?

The available evidence suggests that the additional buffer is not creating a significant burden on development. At the same time, it encourages thoughtful project design and may influence where buildings, driveways, and infrastructure are placed.

The fact that the buffer is rarely needed today does not mean it will not become important in the future. As development pressure increases, these protections may become more valuable, not less valuable. Once development occurs within wetland buffers, the ecological functions those areas provide are difficult or impossible to restore.

For these reasons, I support retaining the existing 100-foot wetland buffer and recommend that any proposed reduction be supported by evidence demonstrating a clear public benefit that outweighs the loss of protection for wetlands, water quality, wildlife habitat, and flood resilience.

One thing I particularly like from the Town Plan is this sentence:

“The Town will continue to support preservation of wetlands and wetland functions by enforcing its Water Resource Overlay District.” (p. 85)

This is a direct statement from the Town Plan that the Town intends to preserve wetlands through the WRO. If there is a proposal on the table that weakens the WRO, it is reasonable for me to ask how that change is consistent with this policy in our current Town Plan.

References:

1. https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wsm/wetlands/docs/2014_Wetlands%20101.pdf

Harmony Cism

From: Mark Letorney <mark@roversnorth.com>
Sent: Friday, July 17, 2026 12:07 PM
To: PlanningCommission
Cc: Harmony Cism
Subject: Westford WROD

Members of Westford Planning Commission,

Vermont's wetlands and waterways are endangered from development, forestry, agriculture activities and changing climate. To say they are critical to wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors and mitigating severe rain events is an understatement. Vermont is becoming warmer and wetter as we experience more intense climate change related storm events. This includes frequent rain events during winter months when the ground is frozen. This allows pollutants like phosphate and nitrate to travel greater distances negatively effecting water quality.

Wetlands need their unique ability to absorb excess water by expanding, just as river and stream banks need the ability to move around to adjust to water volume.

I have worked numerous times with biologists from ANR and VAAFM both on my farm and on town projects. In my 30 years serving our town ANR has called out Westford several times as a model for water quality protection. State biologists agree that in too many cases a 50foot WROD boundary does not offer adequate protection for wildlife and water quality. Vermont is not flat and waterways and wetlands usually occupy lower elevations, or are moving water to lower elevations. We all live in a water shed and we do not own the water on our property.

Our Westford Town Plan clearly supports our 100foot WROD for the protection of sensitive wildlife areas provided by wetland and waterways. Reducing our current WROD boundaries is not supported by our Town Plan.

In my many years serving on the Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Planning Commission I have never experienced the 100foot WROD hinder, or restrict development. It has been my experience on several occasions it creates better, more thoughtful development and less impact on neighbors.

I strongly suggest that PC members take time to become educated on the lessons learned by ANR's river bank and wetland boundary studies and learn that both need a lot of room to expand and move around in order to protect water quality. ANR has excellent examples illustrating the results of towns with adequate and poor boundary protection.

I feel the PC should only advance changes after thorough research supported by citizen survey and public outreach. We have learned over the years that in order for our Town to be successful when challenged in Vermont Environmental Court our Land Use and Development Regulations must be entirely supported by our Town Plan.

Westford is not rural by accident. Westford retains its rural character and remains sprawl free because of diligent planning and comprehensive regulations that have evolved over many years based on community input and support.

The 100foot WROD established in the early 70s is as old as Westford's Land Use and Development Regulations. It remains an important tool that promotes and protects Westford's wildlife and rural character that citizens consistently support in survey after survey throughout our Town's history.

Respectfully,
Mark Letorney

Harmony Cism

From: Harmony Cism
Sent: Thursday, June 25, 2026 8:51 AM
To: PlanningCommission
Cc: selectboard
Subject: FW: UVM Fall Semester Internships/Projects

FYI!

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: Vermont Planners Association <VPA@list.uvm.edu> **On Behalf Of** Ravi Venkataraman

Sent: Thursday, June 25, 2026 8:32 AM

To: VPA@LIST.UVM.EDU

Subject: [VPA] UVM Fall Semester Internships/Projects

Hi all,

Aside from the day job, I also teach a class on urban planning at UVM and serve as an internship coordinator. In the past, students have worked on a range of projects, like:

- Data collection - Including inventories of businesses in municipalities, and sidewalk inventories.
- Survey creation and distribution
- Town Plan assistance - Like, assembling data, maps, and supplementary materials
- Ordinance and policy research
- Designs and Renderings - For public engagement materials, and ongoing commission/board discussions
- Mapping - Such as identifying trails and utilities, but also for municipal plans
- Data organization

This semester, I'm going to have a lot of eager students who are ready to work and learn.

For my program, you can work with students in a variety of ways. You can:

- Have a student as an intern in the most traditional sense;
- Have a group of students work on a particular project, if you don't have the bandwidth to work directly with a student;
- Or, anything in between

The structure is open-ended. Students can work in person or remotely. Typically, students work about 8-10 hours a week. The aim is for them to work 100 hours during the semester. Students do not need to be compensated for the work for this program. But the site does have to cover mileage if the student has to travel for work.

If you're interested in working with a UVM student (typically, a UVM junior or senior), and/or have a project in mind that could be perfect for a student to work on, reach out to me at rvenkata@uvm.edu. I'd be happy to chat about how the program works, and answer any questions you may have.

I'm looking to start my placement process for the fall in early August. My goal is to have students start their internships on the first week of classes on August 31st. Please reach out to me by July 24th if you are interested.

For those of you who have worked with my students in the past, feel free to chime in about your experiences.

Feel free to share this email to anyone you think may be interested.

P.S. I'll be out of the office until July 8th. But I'll be responding to emails to my UVM account while I'm away.

Thanks,

Ravi

-

Ravi Venkataraman, AICP CFM (he/him)

Director of City Planning

City of Winooski

<https://www.winooskivt.gov>

802 540 1540



[Book time to meet with me](#)

Harmony Cism

From: Kirsten Tyler <kirstenbeat@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 26, 2026 1:54 PM
To: Conservation Commission; PlanningCommission
Subject: Fwd: [AVCC] Fall '26 Environmental leadership Trainings

FYI!

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Hilke, Jens" <Jens.Hilke@vermont.gov>
Date: June 26, 2026 at 10:14:19 AM EDT
To: vtconservation@googlegroups.com
Cc: "Horne, Evan" <Evan.Horne@vermont.gov>
Subject: [AVCC] Fall '26 Environmental leadership Trainings

Greetings all,

We are pleased to announce the fall schedule for the Environmental leadership Trainings. These are a great way for Conservation Commission members to quickly get up to speed on pressing environmental issues and how to navigate addressing them within the municipal context. Participants will learn more about individual leadership types, addressing conflict and understanding group development as well as a variety of other skills in this exciting series. Please forward this email to others on your commission or other involved in conservation work

Cheers
jens

[Environmental Leadership Trainings](#)

Our trainings are in-depth, collaborative online courses. The two courses teach the science behind conservation planning along with leadership theory designed to help you grow in your capacity and effectiveness as an environmental leader in your community. These courses are primarily designed for Vermonters engaged at the municipal level as members of conservation commissions or planning commissions, and for those working as conservation volunteers. However, they are open to anyone with an active interest in growing their knowledge and taking a more active role in local environmental leadership in the future. Participants must attend all three sessions as well as complete additional brief online coursework.

Environmental Leadership Training Unit 1: From Science to Planning

This training will introduce participants to important scientific concepts involved in planning for natural resources and focus on skills leaders need to operate effectively. Participants will explore the full suite of issues at play in natural resources planning, from forests and wildlife

to floodplains and climate change. Presentations on context, ecological scale, and planning for whole Communities are interspersed with interactive hands-on activities that make this an intensive and exciting training.

Instructors:

- Jens Hilke, Conservation Planner, VT Fish and Wildlife Department
- Evan Horne, Wetlands Ecologist, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Note: This is a 3-session training course. You must sign up for all three sessions if you wish to take this class and receive the certificate.

- Session 1: Tuesday, October 6th, 2026, 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. Location: Online
- Session 2: Tuesday, October 13th, 2026, 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. Location: Online
- Session 3: Tuesday, October 20th, 2026, 9:00 – 11:30 a.m Location: Online

Email jens.hilke@vermont.gov to register for Environmental Leadership Training Unit 1

Cost is free!

Environmental Leadership Training Unit 2: From Planning to Action

This training will help you choose locally appropriate land use planning strategies for conserving natural resources and explore how leaders can best work with groups to move ideas forward in a municipal context. It uses case studies and exercises to show how taking action can work in real life. The overall goal is to build an understanding of what you can do, how to work with different people in your community, how to choose strategies to protect natural resources, and how to make it all happen. Completion of Unit 1 is a pre-requisite for this training (or permission from instructors).

Instructors:

- Jens Hilke, Conservation Planner, VT Fish and Wildlife Department
- Evan Horne, Wetlands Ecologist, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Note: This is a 3-session training course. You must sign up for all three sessions if you wish to take this class and receive the certificate.

- Session 1: Tuesday, December 1st, 2026, 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. Location: Online
- Session 2: Tuesday, December 8th, 2026, 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. Location: Online
- Session 3: Tuesday, December 15th, 2026, 9:00 – 11:30 a.m Location: Online

Location: Online Meetings using Microsoft TEAMS

Email jens.hilke@vermont.gov to register for Environmental Leadership Training Unit 2

Cost is free!



Jens Hawkins-Hilke | Conservation Planning Biologist (He/Him/His)
VT Fish & Wildlife Department
Wildlife Division, Community Wildlife Program
111 West Street | Essex Junction, VT 05452
802-461-6791 cell
<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/>

--

You received this message because you are subscribed to the Google Groups "Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions" group.

To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to vtconservation+unsubscribe@googlegroups.com.

To view this discussion visit

<https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/vtconservation/MN2PR09MB4714EC77473CD525864E4AD88CEB2%40MN2PR09MB4714.namprd09.prod.outlook.com>.

1705 Comments from July 4th of 2026

Table set up on Common, with 3 note books (Red, Yellow, Black) for comments to be entered.

Transcribed by Pat Haller, July 9, 2026

Red Notebook

My Vision for 1705 Property:

The most simple plan would be a trail and river access. We would love a river hangout close to the Common. If sewer treatment is an option, a small affordable senior housing option.

Mound system paid by those who are going to use it. Town folk pay taxes for Library and Town Hall Portion.

Waterfront Access & a Park

- + Permanent location for Westford Rink
- + Possibly a skate park in the summer

Waterfront fun and Access!

Maker Space

River Access!

The beach and River are beautiful

Residents should have access.

The Land is almost a natural amphitheater. It would be a beautiful location for Bands

I would tear down the building for extra parking

Additionally a large pavilion that would have a multi-use; Farmers Market- covered ice rink

Build the anti-common. A place we can park on, snowmobile on, grill, and have a huge playground!

River Access is super nice and the trail leading to it was great. I support the use of this space for Community Access.

Black Note book

A river access would be amazing. I love the idea of nature trails with information

I know the home needs work, but if possible, we should try to preserve it.

I am still concerned about the soil contamination

I'm not as excited about the amphitheater since we have the gazebo already

I would like to see an invasive management plan to address invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed.

Is there solar potential?
Signed: 4 Common Road

Nature Trail

Organic Farm/Farmstand

River Access is transformative for how the vitality of the grows (editor note, suspect missing a word).
It becomes a destination rather than transactional

Yellow Note Book

What a beautiful property! A gentle walk down to the river with a peaceful sandy spot to sit near the water. This site must have river access. Place a few benches near the water. Up top is a great spot for additional parking for the Common. Picnic tables and grills near the water. The hill down would be a great spot for a natural amphitheater for a music venue!!! A large covered pavilion would be great!!! The draw is to the water. Maybe disk golf?

River Access would be great!!

Having it be a river access/beach would be great for the community!

Ditto (up arrow), Tom

Burn it. Fire Dpt Test site then build a nice Town Office, renovate current town office and rent it out for retail space. Burn the little garage too. Yes more park like area + access to River. Picnic Tables but frankly – I am still very discouraged that we have no comprehensive wastewater system that would have allowed the Town to thrive + GROW + hopefully the Provision store could have a hookup + be able to have sitdown inside for coffee etc. Enough with scare tactics of our town becoming like Essex. Shame. Some growth is Needed.

I like the idea of river access. There could be a few picnic tables down there. Model after what Fairfax has done. Access from BFA at the river. There are gravel and grass walking path with picnic tables.